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‘Turning others’ leaves’: *imitatio* and
intertextuality in sixteenth-century English
receptions of classical Latin love elegy

Linda Grant

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2014

Statement of originality

I declare that this thesis is the product of my own work, and that any work used from other authors has been properly acknowledged.

Linda Grant, April 2014

Abstract

This thesis situates itself within the field of classical reception, and explores the appropriation and imitation of Latin erotic elegy (Catullus, Propertius, Ovid, Sulpicia) in the love poetry of sixteenth-century England. It shows *imitatio* to be a dynamic, rich and sophisticated practice, one which may be productively read as both a form of intertextuality and reception, terms which capture its contingent and active nature. The readings here re-calibrate Petrarch's *canzoniere* suggesting that this influential sequence of love sonnets is itself a moralised re-writing of Roman erotic elegy. By re-framing the 'Petrarchan' love poetry of Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, John Donne and Mary Sidney as elegiac receptions, the readings here re-open these familiar texts and offer fresh interpretations of how they can be made to mean.

The introduction traces the presence of Latin love elegy in the early modern period, and shows that a modern scholarly over-reliance on Petrarch and Ovid has obscured the way Renaissance love poetry is also shaped by and through its relationships to the texts of Catullus, Propertius and Sulpicia. The four chapters which follow trace these intertextual relationships in detail through readings of a small number of poems: those of Catullus and Wyatt, Propertius and Sidney, Ovid and Donne, and Sulpicia and Mary Sidney.

The interventions which this project makes are two-fold: firstly it applies modern theories of reception and intertextuality to Renaissance love poetry, and refreshes the way *imitatio* may be read. Secondly, it re-frames 'Petrarchan' love poetry of sixteenth-century England and reveals it to be a complex, subtle and sometimes revisionary re-writing of Latin love elegy. By reading the multiple concerns of elegy and its sometimes problematic uses of love, gender and erotic desire into the selected English texts, this project offers fresh interpretations of both bodies of poetry, and demonstrates that Roman elegy has a vital and complex presence in the poetics of sixteenth-century England.

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Textual note

As a general principle, I have taken quotations from classical Latin texts from the Oxford Classical Text (OCT), with translations from the Loeb edition: translations are sometimes lightly and silently adapted in keeping with the OCT. The few Greek quotations that appear are given in translation only from either the Loeb or, in the case of Homer, from the Richmond Lattimore translations.

Early modern quotations are taken from standard editions as noted in the footnotes and bibliography, and follow the editors' decisions on modernisation of spelling and punctuation: so, for example, Thomas Nashe's texts, following McKerrow, appear unmodernised, while Thomas Wyatt's poetry, taken from Rebholtz, has been adapted to current spelling conventions.

Abbreviations that appear in the footnotes are OED for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and OLD for the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Standard abbreviations for Latin texts are given in footnotes, but the texts are given their full name in the body of chapters to avoid confusion.

Introduction: ‘All that rout of lascivious poets that wrote epistles and ditties of love’

0.1 ‘We should write just as bees make honey’: *imitatio*, Roman love elegy, and the ‘Petrarchan’

The opening sonnet of Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* gives a vivid picture of a sixteenth-century English poet struggling to write love poetry. Astrophil’s first recourse is to previous poets: ‘oft turning others’ leaves, to see if thence would flow | some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain’.¹ Poetic inspiration is presupposed to come from reading prior writers, ‘turning others’ leaves’.² But the practice of Renaissance literary *imitatio* is not a simple or unsophisticated one. ‘Turning’ certainly refers to the turning over of pages as Astrophil scours through what has already been written; but it also implies a metamorphic art, the ‘turning’ of one image, trope, text or even genre into something undoubtedly related and, yet, different.³

This thesis traces the imitation - a ‘turning’ - of classical Latin love elegy (specifically Catullus, Propertius, Ovid and Sulpicia) in, and into, the so-called ‘Petrarchan’ love poetry of four English writers of the sixteenth century: Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, John Donne, and Mary Sidney. The following four chapters

¹ *Astrophil and Stella* 1.7-8: all quotations from this text are from Duncan-Jones (1989, revised 2002).

² *Astrophil and Stella* may also be read as evidence that *imitatio* is not conceived of in this period as an agonistic, Freudian father-son relationship between poets as is suggested in Bloom (1973).

³ Genre is used throughout this thesis as a form of shorthand, a quick way of referring to a set of codes and conventions which structure the relations between a group of texts; it can be thought of as an organisation and naming of a set of intertextual topoi, and as both ‘a process of... eclectic reception’ and a function of imitation: see e.g. Skoie in Martindale & Thomas (2006) quotation from 94, also Conte (1994). For Renaissance thinking on genre see Dubrow (1982) ix, 30 where she describes it as a literary ‘code of behaviour’. Classical poets also defined genre by metre: many of the elegies examined here are written in elegiac couplets but certainly some of Catullus’ Lesbia poems do not conform metrically, such as c.51 which is written in sapphics; on Catullus as a forerunner of elegy proper, McPeck (1939) 103, Johnson (2007) 186, Miller (2007) 399, Booth (1999) xi, Gutzwiller (2012), Fitzgerald (2013) 64-65. So genre is recognised here to be unstable and varied, identifiable and yet also transitory: for a modern review of genre, see Duff (2000); on these qualities in Latin genre see Papangelis, Harrison & Frangoulidis (2013).

explore, through close and detailed readings, the complex dialogues set up by and between the selected Roman and English texts. By focusing on *imitatio* as a reciprocal textual dialogue, this project considers both what erotic elegy does to, and for, sixteenth-century love poetry, and what sixteenth-century poetry does with, and to, love elegy. In other words, eschewing a simplistic and one-directional model of classical influence or source study which implies a hierarchical and overly mechanistic approach to the Renaissance imitation of classical texts, this thesis instead investigates how placing these poems in juxtaposition leads to readings which mutually illuminate both the Roman and English texts.

Imitatio, as the scholar Thomas Greene points out, is a broad, loose and unstable critical term that encompasses appropriations of style, vocabulary, theme, topoi or form, as well as adaptation, paraphrase or translation.⁴ It is also, as the *Astrophil and Stella* quotation above shows, a fundamental ‘literary technique’ of Renaissance poetics.⁵ The next section of this introduction problematises Greene’s influential analysis of *imitatio*. For the moment, however, it can be said that the imitation of Roman erotic elegy in and by sixteenth-century love poetry is a surprisingly under-explored topic.

Much has been written on the imitation of Ovid in the Renaissance generally, and there have been specific studies on the influence of the *Amores* as well as the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*.⁶ Catullus, too, has attracted some attention: both the way in which he was read in Renaissance Italy, as well as how his poetry might be situated against the Petrarchan.⁷ But there has been no study, to date, of classical erotic elegy as a genre which serves to inform,

⁴ Greene (1982) 51, 171. On translation as a form of reception, Bassnett (2014) 3.

⁵ Greene (1982) 81. Imitation is also a pedagogical practice and one which is central to the European humanist curriculum: Greene (1982), also Green (2009) on humanist education.

⁶ ‘Ovid’ as used here and throughout this thesis stands as a metonymy for the works of the poet: this notation applies to all the authors named. On the reception of Ovid in the Renaissance see Barkan (1986), Martindale (1988), Bate (1994), Stapleton (1996), Taylor (2000), Enterline (2000), Lyne (2001), Pugh (2005), Kilgour (2012).

⁷ Gaisser (1993), Blevins (2004).

organise and shape what is a dominant mode, for Renaissance poetry, of articulating literary love and erotic relationships.⁸

Given this space in the scholarly literature, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the following questions: how do sixteenth-century English texts participate in the discourses mapped out by Roman elegy, and what work might classical love elegy do in cultural, social, political, literary and ideological terms for English Renaissance love poetry? In pursuing this agenda, we will also consider what an identification with the sometimes problematic texts of the Latin elegists might signify in sixteenth-century England; and what the cultural potential and hermeneutic possibilities of erotic poetics might be for our specific English poets. A subsidiary objective is to trace how varying practices of *imitatio* might work on an intimate, text-to-text level.

The practice of *imitatio* might be a fundamental principle of Renaissance poetics but, as Charles Martindale, amongst others, remarks, it functions more as ‘creative assimilation’ rather than as simple allusion or quotation, and tends to result in texts which are ‘derived from, but independent of, the original’.⁹ This can be seen clearly from Renaissance writers’ own articulation of their practice of *imitatio*. Petrarch, in a letter to Boccaccio in 1365, says: *curandum imitatori, ut quod scribit simile non idem sit*, ‘the concern of the imitator should be that what he writes may be similar, not the same’.¹⁰ In the same letter, Petrarch uses the analogy of bees making honey, drawing on Seneca’s epistle on imitation, as a stimulus to creation:

... denique Senecae consilio quod ante Senecam Flacci erat, ut scribamus scilicet sicut apes mellificant, non servatis floribus, sed in favos versis, ut ex multis et variis unum fiat, idque aliud et melius.

⁸ Parker (2012) briefly surveys neo-Latin elegy in the Renaissance period but does not link it to the Petrarchan, or explore vernacular receptions of love elegy.

⁹ Martindale & Martindale (1990) 12; see also e.g. Bate (1994), Estrin (1994), Taylor (2000), Kilgour (2012). On allusion as a ‘quotation’ of a precedent, see Wills (1996) 2, though this relationship is linguistically complicated when an English text ‘quotes’ from a Latin precedent.

¹⁰ The Latin text is quoted in Greene (1984) 95 from Petrarch’s *Ad familiares* 23.19, the translation is mine.

... and the advice of Seneca, which before Seneca was that of Horace, is that we should write just as bees make honey, not protecting the flowers, but turning them into honey, that from many and various things one thing will be created, and that something different and better.¹¹

Petrarch is not concerned here with straightforward allusion but with a more complex, almost alchemical, process by which a multiplicity of sources inform, and are themselves transformed into, something creative and original. Indeed, Renaissance writers positively reject the idea of the easy and unthinking lifting and re-use of past texts. In a letter from c.1485 Angelo Poliziano states:

those who compose only on the basis of imitation strike me as parrots or magpies bringing out things they don't understand. Such writers lack strength and life; they lack energy, feeling, character... there is nothing true in them, nothing solid, nothing efficacious... to draw nothing from the self and to imitate always is the mark of the unhappy mind.¹²

John Donne is even more direct in his indictment of writers who simply regurgitate others' texts:

But he is worst, who (beggarily) doth chaw
Others' wits' fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spew,
As his own things; and they are his own, 'tis true,
For if one eat my meat, though it be known
The meat was mine, th' excrement is his own.¹³

Ben Jonson, too, in epigram 81 'To Prowl the Plagiary' makes an implicit distinction between *imitatio* and plagiarism.¹⁴

¹¹ Latin text quoted in Greene (1984) 98, the translation is mine. Cf. Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* 84 (*Ad Lucilium*): *nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congegimus... varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit, unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat*, 'we also should imitate these bees, and whatever we have gathered from various reading... we should so blend these various libations so it may even appear, from wherever they may have originated, to be something different from that from which it came' (my translation).

¹² Quoted in Greene (1984) 150 from a letter from Angelo Poliziano to Paolo Cortesi.

¹³ *Satire* 2.25-30 dated to c.1590-3: all quotations from Donne are from Carey (1990, revised 2000).

Petrarch's bees analogy is not just on the subject of *imitatio* but is itself a reproduction of Seneca's aesthetics of imitation. As each of the following chapters will show, Roman literature is itself acutely and self-consciously imitative as it negotiates its relationship to prior Greek and Latin texts.¹⁵ It thus provides, for sixteenth-century writers, not just a model of content to be re-worked and renewed, but serves as a paradigm of creative and metamorphic *imitatio*.

One of the key points to be drawn from Renaissance texts on *imitatio* is the differentiation and prioritisation of the *res*, 'matter' from the *verba*, 'words'. Ascham's *The Scholemaster* contains an extended discussion of this point, that writers should be concerned with the matter or content of the texts which they are imitating, not simply the words, literal liftings or verbal echoes.¹⁶ This can be seen in practice when we consider the identification of 'Petrarchan' poetry in English: it is quite rare to find straightforward borrowings and literal translations of Petrarch's own texts, even in quasi-translations such as Wyatt's 'Whoso list to hunt'. Chapter 1, which considers Wyatt's renewing of Catullan concerns in this poem, also traces how Wyatt's text draws clear attention to Petrarch's 'Una candida cerva' as a precedent while simultaneously transforming both it and Catullan allusions into a text with a specifically Henrician context and relevance. Imitations of elegy, as will be seen in detail throughout this thesis, operate in a similarly sophisticated manner, and the very absence of specific quotations and direct allusions may be one of the reasons why this relationship has not been explored in more detail to date.

That is not to say that Roman elegy has been ignored completely in the literature: some scholars have certainly acknowledged a more complex genealogy for English 'Petrarchan' poetry than just Petrarch. Jennifer Petrie, for

¹⁴ See also Jonson's *Timber* (c.1615-1635) where Jonson discusses how originality resides in reinterpretation.

¹⁵ The literature on the topic of Roman intertextuality and reception within the classical period is extensive: good theoretical starting-points are Hinds (1987a, 1998), Martindale (1993, 2006, 2013), Wills (1996), Edmunds (2001).

¹⁶ *The Scholemaster* in Vickers (1999).

example, discusses the way Petrarch, in the *canzoniere*, appropriates themes and styles from what she calls ‘the Augustans’: while she accepts Petrarch’s knowledge of Propertius, she is more interested in tracing the presence of Horace, Virgil and Ovid in his love poetry, as well as the influence of the vernacular Italian tradition.¹⁷ Stella Revard argues for a Propertian influence in Donne’s early love poetry but is overwhelmingly concerned with the persona of the lover as represented by both poets, and many of the arguments she makes about the character of the Propertian lover could equally be applied to the Catullan and Ovidian lovers who precede and supersede him.¹⁸ She draws particularly on Helen Gardner who herself sees echoes of *Amores* 1.9, Tibullus 1.10, Propertius 3.4 and 3.5 in Donne’s ‘Love’s War’, a testament to the way the Latin elegiac genre influences Donne, rather than a single elegiac poet.¹⁹

Paul Allen Miller recognises what he calls a ‘Petrarchan-Ovidian’ tradition, as does Barbara Estrin; Arthur Marotti, however, sees the Ovidian and the Petrarchan as opposed to each other since he associates the Ovidian with ‘the anti-feminist devaluation of women’ versus Petrarchan devotion.²⁰ Heather Dubrow cites the influence of classical poets on Petrarch, W.R. Johnson reads Petrarch’s lover as developing out of Catullus, and Gregory Heyworth remarks that Petrarch’s *canzoniere* play a critical role in ‘advancing the form of the elegiac sequence from its Augustan origins in Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius and Catullus’ - but these are all passing comments in books which have other concerns than the imitation of elegy.²¹

In a more focused study, Joseph Blevins argues for what he calls a ‘Catullan consciousness’ in Renaissance love lyric but sees this as an alternative to, and deviation from, the Petrarchan conventions, rather than as springing from one of

¹⁷ Petrie (1983).

¹⁸ Revard (1986).

¹⁹ Gardner (1965).

²⁰ Miller (1991); Estrin (1994); Marotti (1986) 68.

²¹ Dubrow (1995); Johnson (2009) 6, Heyworth (2009) 179. On Heyworth’s comment, Catullus is not, of course, an ‘Augustan’ but is writing in the c.50s BCE in the late Republican Rome of Cicero and Julius Caesar, both of whom have a presence in his poetry: see chapter 1. The elegies of Sulpicia were transmitted in the Tibullan corpus and so references in this introduction to Tibullus, who is not one of the poets studied here, can also be taken to include Sulpicia’s texts.

the strands which informs the development of Petrarchism, as this project does.²² At the same time, he reads Catullus' Lesbia poems as the first love sequence in Western literature, a premise which, surely, argues for a closer rather than more distant relationship between Catullus, Petrarch and their imitators, even though the Lesbia poems are, perhaps deliberately, not ordered as a sequence.²³

It is certainly not new, then, to detect a relationship between Latin erotic elegy and Renaissance 'Petrarchan' love lyric but the approach taken here, in contrast to past scholarship, is that of a sustained, focused and less fragmented view of Latin elegy allowing an examination of the way elegiac discourse as a whole informs the Petrarchan mode of poetics. Petrarch, in this thesis, serves as a crucial mediator of love elegy into sixteenth-century England.

The elegiac 'plot' is a simple one, and can be mapped onto the Petrarchan with relative ease. In elegy, the poet-narrator ('Catullus', 'Propertius', 'Ovid', 'Sulpicia') is obsessively in love with a sexually available though somehow still elusive mistress (Lesbia, Cynthia, Corinna) or, in the case of Sulpicia, the male Cerinthus, and the poems celebrate his or her erotic servitude.²⁴ Many of the same tropes and conventions reappear in each poet's work: the *recusatio* where the narrator defends his writing of *nugae*, 'trifles', rather than serious epic; the *paraclausithyron*, recited before the mistress's closed door; the birthday poem; the sickness poem; kiss poems; poems which voyeuristically undress the mistress; and the repeated use of the conventions and imagery of *militia amoris*,

²² Blevins (2004).

²³ Blevins (2004) 5. For a summary of the debates about the ordering and authorial arrangement of Catullus' poems see Skinner (1981) and especially (2007b); now also Hutchinson (2012). Du Quesnay & Woodman (2012) 268 discusses papyrological evidence that Roman readers sometimes copied out poems for their own reading therefore upsetting any authorial organisation: these individual reading copies parallel, to some extent, sixteenth-century manuscripts and common-place books and upset the idea that authorial ordering was crucial to interpretation.

²⁴ Throughout this thesis 'Catullus' etc. is used to distinguish the poetic narrator from the historic individual or the poetic *oeuvre*.

‘the military campaign of love’.²⁵

It is not hard to see how these tropes which help constitute the elegiac genre inform Petrarchan poetry: the depictions of obsessive love, the elusiveness of the mistress, the overwhelming concern with the poet-narrator’s subjectivity, the translation of *militia amoris* into the bows and arrows of Cupid, the prevalence of kiss poems, and the re-emergence of the undressed mistress as the Renaissance blazon. Even the form of a ‘cycle’ of elegies may be linked to the Renaissance sonnet sequence, both modes displaying their fragmentation as much as their unity.²⁶

Petrarch’s elegiac appropriations are many and his debt to Ovid has been especially well served by the literature, but it is also possible to identify more varied, intriguing, and non-Ovidian elegiac echoes within Petrarch’s texts.²⁷ *Canzoniere* 250, for example, portrays a scene where ‘Petrarch’ is visited by Laura’s ghost, an event which also serves as the basis for his *Triumph of Death*, translated by Mary Sidney, both poems drawing on Propertius 4.7, where Cynthia’s ghost comes back from the underworld. Laura’s speech in c.250 draws on Propertius 4.7 but also Sulpicia’s last poem, [Tibullus] 3.18; and Petrarch’s c.224, written in a single sentence, also alludes to [Tibullus] 3.18, Sulpicia’s poem notably written in one long, breathless sentence. We will return to these specific instances of *imitatio* in the relevant chapters on Propertius-Sidney and Sulpicia-Mary Sidney respectively, but for now the point to be made is that to trace the ‘Petrarchan’ solely back to Petrarch, or Petrarch’s poetry only back to Ovid, is misleadingly narrow and distorts the literary framework through which sixteenth-century English love texts and sonnets may be read. Petrarch certainly

²⁵ On *militia amoris* see Cahoon (1988), McKeown (1995); on images of the military triumph in elegy, Murgatroyd (1975), Miller (1995), Beard (2007); on the trope of erotic sickness in Catullus, Booth (1997).

²⁶ Wills (1996) 16 asks an important question: ‘what gives us permission to connect two texts?’. His answers are multiple: allusions may be constructed through technical ‘permissions’ such as diction, syntax, or form, but also through ‘narrative similarities’ (15). The connections being made in this thesis between Roman elegy and sixteenth-century love poetry is primarily, though not exclusively, of the latter type.

²⁷ On Ovid in Petrarch, see e.g. Petrie (1983), Freccero (1986), Miller (1991), Estrin (1994), Dubrow (1995), Hardie (1999), Braden (2000), Johnson (2009), Heyworth (2009).

operates as an important mediator and transmitter of elegy, but the relationship between elegy, Petrarch, and English (indeed, European) 'Petrarchan' love lyric is a more convoluted, tangled and fascinating one than has been generally acknowledged in the literature.

So why does this matter? The labelling of poems as 'Petrarchan' settles an interpretative framework on them which foregrounds the undoubted debt owed to the *canzoniere*, but which also tends to obscure elements which do not fit the Petrarchan model.²⁸ Poetic deviations from Petrarch are overwhelmingly defined as 'anti-Petrarchan' so that they remain located within the contours of Petrarchan discourse.²⁹ One significant transformation which Petrarch makes in his re-writing of Roman love elegy is the Neoplatonic moralisation of Laura. As will be seen in chapter 1, Catullus' Lesbia is conspicuous for her immorality: the texts show her lying and cheating, and make much of her monstrous sexual appetite and lack of chastity. Propertius' Cynthia, Ovid's Corinna, and Sulpicia's Cerinthus might not be represented with quite the level of invective and obscenity that is found in Catullus, but they, too, are, according to their narrators, unfaithful and deceitful. Petrarch's chaste, virtuous, muted and untouchable Laura is none of these things, and his editing out of the sexual explicitness and debauched morality of elegiac women is hugely influential on sixteenth-century sonnet sequences and love poetry.³⁰ Sidney's Stella certainly owes much to Petrarch's Laura but more problematic facets of the elegiac mistress re-emerge in Donne's erotic poetry, in the 'betrayal' poems of Robert Sidney to be looked at presently in this introduction, and in Wyatt's women who, as shown in chapter 1, are neither untouchable nor silent.

²⁸ For example, Spiller (2001) 2-3 'Petrarch... almost single-handedly supplied the whole of Renaissance Europe with the themes and motifs of love poetry'; Brigden & Woolfson (2005) in tracing Wyatt's diplomatic travels in France and Italy during the 1520s note the influence of their literature, particularly Petrarchan love poetry, on his own writing; Cheney (2011) 101 on Wyatt's adoption of Petrarchism, and 128-130 on his reliance on Petrarch and Ovid.

²⁹ For examples of the use of 'anti-Petrarchan' as a term of analysis see especially Dubrow (1995), Blevins (2004).

³⁰ On the Petrarchan 'sonnet lady' as 'the moral dynamic to lead to his [the poet-lover's] spiritual improvement', Woodcock (1996) 51.

The recognition of elegiac erotics as a source of *imitatio* for so-called 'Petrarchan' love poetry thus becomes critical because it shifts and refocuses the interpretative framework through which this body of verse may be read. As is the case with genre, identifying an imitative model sets certain expectations, concentrates and 'signposts' the reader's attention towards particular elements in the imitating text. This does not, of course, mean that imitations cannot interrogate, resist or dismantle the sources from which they spring - Petrarch does precisely that by moralising the elegiac mistress in his creation of Laura. A failure to recognise and acknowledge a model in the first place, however, prevents us from comprehending what might have been done with it in its imitative transformation. As John Frow asserts, 'the prehistory of the text is not a given but is relative to an interpretative grid'.³¹

An example of the kind of mis-readings this failure of recognition can give rise to may be found in an essay by Gordon Braden on Petrarch and Ovid.³² Braden reads what he sees as Petrarch's appropriation of the last lines of the *Metamorphoses* into the *canzoniere* as 'one of the most innovative and influential twists' Petrarch gives to love poetry as 'his lady is... all but indistinguishable from his literary ambition'.³³ Propertian scholars, however, had been exploring the way in which the elegiac *puella*, 'mistress', operates as an embodiment of the literary project and elegiac text well before 2000.³⁴ Rather than Petrarch being an originator of this 'twist', his poetry is adopting what becomes a conventional elegiac trope from Propertius onwards. The metapoetic nature of the elegiac beloved is made especially prominent by Sulpicia when her beloved is named Cerinthus, 'wax-man', an allusion to the wax-tablets on which her elegies are written.³⁵ Petrarch's 'innovation' comes from the application of this trope to the chaste Laura, rather than the sexually active mistress (or male

³¹ Frow (1990) 46.

³² Hardie cites another mis-reading by Bate: Hardie (2013) 195.

³³ Braden (2000), quotations from 101.

³⁴ See Wyke's essays on the *scripta puella* first published in the 1990s, collected in Wyke (2002); also Miller (1994) on the importance of writing as an elegiac theme.

³⁵ See chapter 4 for further discussion of Sulpicia's Cerinthus; on the name Cerinthus see Boucher (1976), Roessel (1990).

beloved) of elegy, and thus reveals something important about his resistance to, and re-writing of, elegiac erotics. What this example demonstrates is how recognising the source of *imitatio* as, in this case, Roman love elegy, reconfigures our understanding of the relationship between Petrarch's sonnets, sixteenth-century English Petrarchan poetry, and the classical precedents with which they engage.

0.2 *Imitatio* and intertextuality: 'cultural discontinuity' or 'creative assimilation'?

In his influential *The Light in Troy*, published in 1982, Thomas Greene asked how can we 'discuss imitative works *as* imitations' (his emphasis) and account for the 'dynamic presence' of classical texts in Renaissance poetry.³⁶ He goes on to define four strategies of Renaissance *imitatio* but, for all his precision, his analysis prompts reservations.³⁷ The chief of these concerns his quest to uncover and articulate a single and unifying theory of Renaissance *imitatio* at a macro level. He reads *imitatio* as designating the broad cultural relationship between a classical past and a Renaissance present, and thus allocates to humanism a coherent and monolithic agenda. In his schema, *imitatio* is nothing less than a grand and all-embracing system for negotiating a relationship with the lost classical past, an attempt 'to heal that estrangement which humanism had constantly to face'.³⁸ Greene's narrative is one of loss and a conscious sense of anachronism, but does this vast, comprehensive and all-embracing approach help us to understand the relationships on a microcosmic level between two (or more) texts?

³⁶ Greene (1982) 1.

³⁷ Greene's strategies are the 'reproductive' where a 'sacred original' is reproduced; the 'eclectic' where simple allusions or quotations are used in a sometimes random way; the 'heuristic' where the imitation announces its derivation from past texts but also distances itself from past culture; and the 'dialectical' which is the site of a 'struggle between texts and between eras', where texts 'criticise' each other: see Greene (1982) 38-48.

³⁸ Greene (1982) 41.

Malcolm Bull contests Greene's unifying narrative and suggests that the humanist engagement with classical culture was less coherent and consistent, more fragmentary and arbitrary than Greene proposes.³⁹ Charles Martindale also expresses some discontent with his analysis: discussing Shakespeare's 'free and relaxed' use of classical texts, he fails to discern the sense of melancholic loss and cultural disjunction at the heart of Greene's narrative.⁴⁰

So does Greene's analysis really help to explain all that is happening when Donne, for example, writes erotic elegies in London in the 1590s - is Donne confronting an entire lost classical civilisation, or is he working on a far smaller scale; do his elegies really enact a wholesale cultural clash, or construct a far more intimate relationship with one or more individual poetic texts? The explorations in the following four chapters take account of these questions and consider whether, and where, anxieties might be located as sixteenth-century poets engage with Roman elegy.

What is productive from Greene's analysis is his positioning of *imitatio* as a form of intertextuality.⁴¹ This is, of course, like *imitatio*, a baggy and capacious term. For Greene, intertextuality is a means by which Renaissance texts register a sense of 'cultural discontinuity', a way of structuring their estranged relationship from a lost classical past.⁴² What this model fails to allow for are mediations, such as Petrarch's re-writing of elegy, that insert themselves between the classical 'originals' and Renaissance 'imitations', and the way in which Renaissance verse may be engaging with near-contemporary texts at the same time as it is imitating classical poetics.

³⁹ Bull (2005)

⁴⁰ Martindale & Martindale (1990) 14.

⁴¹ Greene (1982) 2. A single and universally agreed definition of intertextuality is impossible but Allen (2000) 5 offers a process which 'foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence'. For theoretical discussions on intertextuality including its provenance and history in the work of Kristeva, Bakhtin, Barthes and others see e.g. Frow (1990), Worton & Stills (1990), Allen (2000), Orr (2003); for intertextuality in relation to the reception of classical Latin texts Martindale (1988, 1993, 2006, 2013), Hinds (1998), Edmunds (2001); on the intertextuality of love elegy, O'Rourke (2012).

⁴² Greene (1982) 17-30.

This thesis builds, then, on Greene's siting of *imitatio* as a form of intertextuality, but complicates the intertextual function. Instead of understanding intertextuality in Renaissance texts as a marker of cultural loss, here it is read in positive terms as a means of developing our sensitivity to the presence of other textual voices - both classical and 'contemporary' (to sixteenth-century readers) - and of expanding the relational complex against, and within, which poems site themselves. One important element of this nexus is Roman elegy, but the following chapters also read Wyatt, for example, not just with Catullus but in relation to Petrarch and Henry VIII's love letters; and Donne with Thomas Nashe as well as Ovid. Latin elegy, too, frequently defines itself against other earlier and contemporary texts, and some of its own revealing imitations and intertexts are discussed throughout this project. A central critical assumption underpinning this thesis is that if *imitatio* is a crucial praxis of sixteenth-century, and Roman, poetics, then the resultant texts have to be read relationally, against preceding, contemporary, and even later, writing.

One effect of self-consciously reading texts in this historicised relational mode rather than in a linear or chronological fashion is to collapse the hierarchy which Greene's model maintains of classical texts as always being originary and prior to later 'imitations'. Martindale, especially, captures the potentially anachronistic way of reading *imitatio* when he suggests that insights into classical texts might be 'locked up' in later receptions and re-writings.⁴³ The following chapters have been built on this principle of positive anachronism and highlight the way Renaissance imitations of elegy may bring previously unseen elements of elegiac meaning into startling focus. The concern here is not just what elegy does to its sixteenth-century imitations, but what they do to our reading of elegy.

⁴³ Martindale (1993, 2013).

0.3 'Ovid was there and with him were Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus': Roman love elegy in the Renaissance

A review of modern Renaissance scholarship on erotic love poetry will reveal an over-reliance on the influence of Ovid and the vaguely defined term of the 'Ovidian'.⁴⁴ But this quotation from Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* (4.22-24) is evidence that Petrarch himself placed Ovid firmly within the elegiac love tradition (even if he does give him prime position) indicating a canon of classical love poets upon whom he draws:

Ovid was there, and with him were Catullus,
Propertius and Tibullus, and they all
Were fervid singers of the power of love.⁴⁵

By depicting himself as a fellow victim of love paraded in this triumph alongside Catullus, Propertius, Ovid and Tibullus, Petrarch inserts himself into this roll-call of love elegists. As chapter 4 discusses in more detail, Petrarch's *Triumphs* were frequently appended to his *canzoniere*, and were read as a kind of appendix to the sonnets.⁴⁶ Positioning himself here as following in the footsteps of the Roman elegists would therefore have a spill-over effect into the sonnets themselves which draw quite explicitly on elegiac conventions.

Petrarch's overt acknowledgement of his debt to elegy is one example of where a distorting gap has opened up between modern Renaissance scholarship which prioritises the influence of Ovid at the expense of Catullus, Propertius and Sulpicia, and the way Renaissance poets themselves constructed a Roman poetic love tradition.⁴⁷ Before reviewing some of the other evidence for this, it is worth a reminder here that Ovid was not working at the start of what might loosely be

⁴⁴ For example, LaBranche (1966), Armstrong (1977), Carey (1981), Freccero (1986), Barnard (1987), Lerner (1988), Miller (1991), Stapleton (1996), Hardie (1999), Clarke (2000), Braden (2000), Brown (2004). On the imprecision of the term 'Ovidian' as used by Renaissance scholars see Keach (1977) though he is primarily concerned with the erotic epyllion rather than lyric.

⁴⁵ Quotations from Petrarch's *Triumphs* are from Wilkins (1962).

⁴⁶ Alexander (2006) 100.

⁴⁷ Sulpicia's texts were transmitted in the corpus of Tibullus so references to the latter also indicate access to the former: see chapter 4 for details.

called the elegiac tradition, short as it is, but right at the end. As such, his texts pick up on, and respond to, the work of Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus and Sulpicia.⁴⁸

Ovid himself makes clear his debt to his predecessors, and acknowledging an elegiac 'tradition' becomes itself a shadowy convention within elegy. In *Tristia* 4, for example, speaking of Tibullus, 'Ovid' states *successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi; | quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui*, 'he was your successor, Gallus, Propertius his; I was the fourth in time's order' (4.10.53-4). Gallus here refers to Cornelius Gallus, the apparent originator of love elegy whose work now exists only in fragments.⁴⁹ [Tibullus] 3.6.41 makes reference to *doctus Catullus* when discussing his c.64 about the love of Ariadne for Theseus; and Propertius 2.34, a poem about Roman poetry, ends with a genealogy of elegy leading up to Propertius' own work:⁵⁰

Haec quoque lascivi cantarunt scripta Catulli,
 Lesbia quis ipsa notior est Helena;
 [...] et modo formosa quam multa Lycoride Gallus
 mortuus inferna vulnera lavit aqua!
 Cynthia quin vivet versu laudata Properti,
 hos inter si me ponere Fama volet
2.34.87-94⁵¹

Such themes the verse of wanton Catullus also sang, which made Lesbia better known than Helen herself... and in these recent days of how many wounds has Gallus, dead for love of fair Lycoris, laved in the waters of the

⁴⁸ See, for example, Lyne (1980), Keith (1994), Pincus (2004), Miller (2007), Myers (2012) on Ovid's position within the elegiac 'tradition'.

⁴⁹ On the Gallus fragments, Anderson, Parsons & Nisbet (1979), Putnam (1980), Newman (1984), Fairweather (1984), O'Hara (1989). Gallus also appears in Virgil's *Eclogue* 10, a pastoral poem set in Arcadia which gives Renaissance pastoral romance the topos of carving sonnets into tree trunks: *certum est in silvis, inter spelaea ferarum | malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores | arboribus*, 'well I know that in the woods, amid wild beasts' dens, it is better to suffer and carve my love on the young trees' (10.52-54).

⁵⁰ This is also the poem where Propertius makes reference to Virgil's writing of the *Aeneid*, describing it as *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade*, 'something greater than the Iliad is coming to birth' (2.34.65), a line which is frequently quoted in Renaissance prefaces and commentaries on the *Aeneid*.

⁵¹ All quotations from Propertius are from Heyworth (2007), translations from Goold (1990, revised 1999).

world below! Yea, Cynthia glorified in the pages of Propertius shall live, if Fame consent to rank me with poets like these.

Amores 3.9 is Ovid's funeral elegy for Tibullus which ends with an imagining of Tibullus in Elysium where he will be met by Gallus and *docte Catulle*, 'learned Catullus' (3.9.62).⁵² Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* asks *carmina quis potuit tuto legisse Tibulli / vel tua, cuius opus Cynthia sola fuit?* 'Who could read the poems of Tibullus safely, or yours, whose sole theme was Cynthia?'⁵³

Re-reading Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* in the light of these references proves it to be not only an acknowledgement of the power of the elegists as poets, but also an intertext in its own right, an instance of Petrarch re-using a trope already made conventional by the elegists who have preceded him. As both Propertius and Ovid had previously delineated a tradition which had culminated in their own work, so Petrarch implicitly does the same. To trace Petrarch and the Petrarchan solely back to Ovid is clearly too contracted a history.

Apart from Petrarch, there are plenty of points from the fifteenth century onwards where we may meet Catullus, Propertius, Ovid and Sulpicia, sometimes alone, more often grouped together - Sulpicia most usually under the alias of Tibullus. The chapters below discuss some of the detailed evidence and what it might tell us about the reception of these poets in the Renaissance with specific reference to English readers and writers. Here, however, it is worth getting a general sense of the presence of the elegists in European literary culture from the late fourteenth century onwards.⁵⁴

Petrarch (1304-1374) owned manuscripts of Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus, and his friend and correspondent, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), had the oldest complete manuscript of Tibullus (including Sulpicia), a Propertius, and

⁵² On Catullus as a proto-elegist writing before Gallus see above.

⁵³ *Rem. Am.* 763-4: See also Boyd (1997) on the influence of Propertius on the *Amores*.

⁵⁴ It is possible to trace the elegists and their transmission back to the collapse of the Roman empire in the West, via the Carolingian court and through the medieval period: see Pfeiffer (1976), Reynolds (1983) and Reynolds & Wilson (1991).

one of Catullus, possibly inherited from Petrarch.⁵⁵ Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494), a tutor in the Medici household, also had access to Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid - and is perhaps best remembered by classicists today for his infamous 1489 'obscene' reading of Catullus' *passer* poems (cc.2 and 3).⁵⁶ Before this, in 1485, he had written on his textual work and emendations: *Catulli, Tibulli, Propertique libellos coepi ego Angelo Politianus iam inde a pueritia tractare et pro aetatis eius iudicio vel corrigere vel interpretari*, 'I, Angelo Poliziano, already from my youth began to discuss the books of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius, and from my judgement at that time either to correct or interpret them'.⁵⁷ So even before the elegists were printed in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, they were being read, discussed, and written about. Antonio Beccadelli's (1394-1471) *Hermaphroditus* (1425), for example, contains the lines:

Ardeo, mi Galeaz, mollem reperire Catullum,
 Ut possim dominae moriger esse meae.
 Lectitat illa libens teneros lasciva poetas,
 Et praefert numeros, docte Catulle, tuos
 2.23-27

I burn, my Galeaz, to bring back wanton Catullus, so that I am able to
 please my mistress. Lascivious she repeatedly reads the tender poets,
 and prefers, learned Catullus, your lines.⁵⁸

This theme of the tender or soft (*mollem*), and the learned (*docte*, from *doctus*), drawn, it seems, from the way in which Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid described Catullus, is one which will be seen again in relation to the reading and reception

⁵⁵ On Petrarch's manuscript of Catullus see Gaisser (1993) 86; on the earliest extant Propertius manuscript ('A') belonging to Petrarch see Reynolds & Wilson (1991) 129: an older manuscript of Propertius seems to have been owned by Poggio in the 1420s but is no longer extant. On Salutati see Reynolds & Wilson (1991) 134-136. The Catullus manuscript was the one now known as 'R', that of Tibullus is now known as 'A'. Rouse & Reeve (1983) 420-5 speculate that the Tibullus was also owned by Petrarch and passed to Salutati on his death. Greenblatt (2011) gives a lively account of humanist 'book-hunters', including Petrarch, Salutati (122-25), and Poggio.

⁵⁶ On Poliziano, Reynolds & Wilson (1991) 140-3, also Pfeiffer (1976) 44-45 on Poliziano's lectures on classical poetry. The ambiguity of the 'sparrow' poems stems from whether one is prepared to accept *passer* as slang for 'penis': Poliziano's Renaissance reading is available in Gaisser (2007), on the modern debate, see Jocelyn (1980), Hooper (1985), Jones (1988), Pomeroy (2003).

⁵⁷ Swann (1994) 106.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Swann (1994) 97-98: the translation is mine adapted from Swann.

of elegy. It is also worth noting, however fictional this portrait might be, that it is a 'lascivious' woman (*illa... lasciva*) who prefers to read Catullus, indicating that elegy was potentially available to female readers and, possibly, writers.

Beccadelli established the *accademia* in Naples, and was succeeded in 1471 by Giovanni Pontano (1429-1503) who also worked references and homages to Catullus into his verse.⁵⁹ Michael Marullus, associated with the *accademia* under Pontano, wrote *Amor Tibullo, Mars tibi, Maro, debet... docto Catullo syllabae*, 'Love to Tibullus, Mars to Virgil is indebted... hendecasyllables to learned Catullus'; and also composed an epigram on the death of his brother which makes clear references to Catullus' poem on the same subject: *aeternumque, meae, frater, ave, lacrimae!*, 'and forever brother, my tears, farewell!'⁶⁰

The Renaissance common-place book, a successor to medieval florilegia and a staple of the humanist education system, also reveals views of the elegists. Printed common-place books contained extracts from classical texts, primarily Latin, and served as pedagogical tools. Schoolboys were also encouraged to start their own common-place book, to collect excerpts and quotations from their reading and reuse them in their compositions.⁶¹ This seems to institutionalise intertextual practice at the heart of the humanist curriculum, shaping a way of thinking about, consuming and producing literature which has been described as 'formative' and 'programmatic'.⁶² Two popular printed common-place books which were used extensively in schools across Europe reveal the presence of the elegists in the humanist classroom.

The *Margarita Poetica* of Albertus de Eyb (1420-1475) was completed in 1459, first printed in 1472 in Nuremburg, and reprinted thirteen times before 1503 in various European cities including Strasbourg, Paris, Rome, Venice and

⁵⁹ e.g. in his *Parthenopeus*, and *Hendecasyllabi*: see Swann (1994). 'Catullus' refers to his poems as hendecasyllables e.g. c.42.

⁶⁰ Epigram 1.16.1-8, and 1.22 on the death of his brother, both quoted in Swann (1994) 104. Compare the latter with Catullus 101.10, *atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*, 'and forever, O my brother, hail and farewell'.

⁶¹ See Schurink (2010) on manuscript common-place books including one compiled and owned by Robert Sidney whose elegiac poems are discussed later in this introduction.

⁶² Moss (1996) viii; Greene (1982) 81, Green (2009).

Basle.⁶³ The first edition included extensive extracts from Ovid and Tibullus; the later revised edition, reworked between 1495-1503, enlarged these selections and added in Propertius and Catullus.

Johannes Murmellius (1480-1517) first printed his *Ex Elegiacis trium illustrium poetarum Tibulli Propertii ac Ovidii carminibus selecti versus magis memorabiles atque puerorum institutioni aptiores* in 1500, and it was reprinted throughout the sixteenth century.⁶⁴ It is worth noting the title: that Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid are 'three famous poets' (*trium illustrium poetarum*), thus linking them together as a group, and that their texts here are 'more suitable' (*aptiores*), perhaps, in this case, adapted, for boys in school. The preface to this first edition draws attention to the poetic trio as *gentiles et lubrici poetae*, 'pagan and hazardous poets', and advises schoolmasters to choose extracts carefully for the schoolroom - note, though, that the book does not simply expurgate or exclude the so-called morally dangerous, and we have to wonder to what extent schoolmasters were able to police the boys' reading of these 'hazardous' texts. From 1537 even this moralising preface was dropped, the texts were updated from the Aldine editions and the book was retitled *Loci communes sententiosorum versus ex elegiis Tibulli, Propertii, Ovidii*.⁶⁵ In a preface to his *Protrepticus studiosorum poetica* dated 1517, Murmellius advises 'if you intend to write elegy, lay your hands on Tibullus or Propertius!'⁶⁶

It is striking to observe here the priority given to Tibullus and Propertius above Ovid, clearly at odds with the critical orthodoxies reflected in modern Renaissance scholarship. The ambivalent moral position towards these poets is also notable: they may be dangerous, but they are still worth studying at school. The next section of this introduction will return to this anxiety over the erotic nature of elegiac texts, but for the moment we can note the extent to which

⁶³ Moss (1996) 67-70.

⁶⁴ Moss (1996) 87-90.

⁶⁵ Moss (1996) 87-90.

⁶⁶ Sig. F iiii + 1, quoted in Moss (1996) 90. She goes on to note the number of printed commonplace books from the third quarter of the sixteenth century which include Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius (199).

commonplace books like these (and these are just two examples) structured the reading, interpretation and reception of the elegists during the Renaissance period.⁶⁷ It can be seen already that they are grouped together, frequently with Catullus, and that they are both valorised (*illustrum poetarum*) and yet are also the subject of caution and a kind of moral wariness - which may well have encouraged, rather than prohibited, their reading, especially by boys in school.

Not all humanists were quite so accepting of the elegists' position on the educational curriculum: Eneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464, Pope Pius II), for example, in his 1450 *De liberorum educatione*, a treatise on the education of boys, wrote:

elegiam qui scribunt omnes puero negari debent. Nimum sunt enim molles, ut Tibullus, Propertius, Catullus et quae translatae est apud nos Sappho. Raro namque non amatoria scribunt desertosque conqueruntur amantes

all the writers of elegy should be withheld from a boy. Tibullus, Propertius, Catullus and the bits of Sappho that we have in translation are too soft and effeminate. Their writings are almost all about love, and they are continually bemoaning their lost loves.⁶⁸

Ironically, before he became pope (1458-1464), Piccolomini was known for his poetry and especially his erotic epistolary novel, *Historia de duobus amantibus* (1444). The mention of Sappho here is instructive both for the connection with the elegists (Catullus wrote an imitation of Sappho in his c.51 in sapphic metre), and the recognition of a female love poet, a precedent to Sulpicia.⁶⁹

The *editio princeps* of Ovid was published in Bologna in 1471, with another edition in Rome of the same year, and the Aldus Manutius edition in Venice in

⁶⁷ See also Kallendorf (2007) V.373 on the *Sententiae et proverbia ex poetis Latinis*, a European commonplace book for school boys published by Robert Estienne in Paris and Venice in 1534, 1536, 1540, 1547 and at numerous other dates in the sixteenth century: it contained extracts from Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid, as well as many other Latin poets.

⁶⁸ From Kallendorf (2002) 223.

⁶⁹ On Sappho in early modern Europe, Jay & Lewis (1996), Andreadis (2001).

1516-17.⁷⁰ Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus were first printed by the Aldine press in 1472, together in one volume, with Statius appended.⁷¹ This edition was reprinted in Venice in 1475 and in the same year the first commentaries on Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus were published in Rome by Beroaldo.⁷² Between 1481 and 1553 an additional six editions of a combined Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius (no longer with Statius appended) were published in Europe, a testament to their popularity. That they were published together in a single volume may certainly have been due to the relative slowness of their *oeuvre* (in terms of size), but is also evidence that they were read together in this period and that the generic alliances that can be seen in the printed common-place books continued to be asserted. From their first appearance in print, the relationship between Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus seems to have been well-established. A particularly important commentary, the *Castigationes in Catullum, Tibullum, Propertium*, by Joseph Scaliger, published in Paris in 1577, continues this tradition late in the sixteenth century. Scaliger is especially interesting on the female authorship of Sulpicia's poems transmitted in Tibullus, and is discussed in chapter 4.

It was not just the poets who were the subjects of intense interest, but also the genre of erotic elegy itself. In 1557 the Accademia della Fama in Venice published their programme of proposed scholarly and philological projects to be undertaken by their members.⁷³ As well as close investigations of Ovid, Catullus and Propertius, they also desired to examine the use of classical genres more deeply and specifically prioritised the study of erotic elegy. Their intention was not just to study elegy, but also to translate it into the vernacular and publish the best textual editions together with commentaries. 'For Propertius they proposed

⁷⁰ Stapleton (2000) 4.

⁷¹ The Statius was the poems collected as *Silvae*; see Skoie (2002) 327. On the *editio princeps* Butrica (1984: 159-60, 2013), Skoie (2002) 25, Fedeli (2013), Garinelli (2013).

⁷² Bolgar (1963) 278, Skoie (2002) 327.

⁷³ The Accademia della Fama, also known as the Accademia Veneziana, was founded in 1577 by Federico Badoer and was an intellectual body formed to educate the elite youth of the city, and pursue cultural and literary projects. Their formal meetings took place in the Library of San Marco which housed the collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts bequeathed by Cardinal Bessarion to the Venetian Republic in 1468: see Rosenthal (1992) 177-8.

a complete edition of his elegies coupled with “a brief and accurate interpretation by which all the difficult passages of this poet will be made easy.”⁷⁴ Sebastiano Erizzo (1525-1585), a prominent member of the Accademia, specifically compared Latin erotic elegy with Petrarch’s sonnets in 1561: ‘The elegiac verse turned to lighter themes when the poets who devoted themselves to loves and the delights of love invented the amatory elegy, as in their amorous verses they moaned and wept, mixing sighs, sorrows and torments, or they displayed a state of happiness, or pleaded for mercy, reproached their woman, accused her of cruelty or praised her, or apologised and begged for forgiveness.’⁷⁵

The elegists sometime materialise unexpectedly: in a letter written to Francesco Vettori dated 10 December 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli writes: ‘when I leave the wood, I proceed to a well, and thence to the place which I use for snaring birds, with a book under my arm - Dante, or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets, like Tibullus or Ovid. I read the story of their passions, and let their loves remind me of my own, which is a pleasant pastime for a while’.⁷⁶ There may well be more going on here in Machiavelli’s description of a rural idyll than appears at first glance but this is also a nice testament to the way in which elegy was being read in everyday contexts in the early part of the sixteenth century.

Elegy was not only being read, commentated on and emended in humanist Europe, it also served as a model for *imitatio*. Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530) is best known now for his *Arcadia*, possibly the first Renaissance pastoral work in imitation of both Greek and Latin models, which was hugely popular and

⁷⁴ On the Accademia and their engagement with erotic elegy see Rosenthal (1992) chapter 5.

⁷⁵ *Esposizione di M. Sebastiano Erizzo delle tre canzone di Francesco Petrarca* (1561), quoted in Rosenthal (1992) 216.

⁷⁶ Atkinson & Sices (1996). This was written while Machiavelli was working on *Il Principe*, the Prince, following the fall of the Florentine republic, and so perhaps sets up a deliberate juxtaposition between the worlds of the city/politics/Florence, and the sphere of exile/the countryside/love. However, this perhaps disingenuous opposition may break down: Dante’s *Commedia* is acutely concerned with Florentine politics; Petrarch wrote the *Africa*, an epic poem in Latin with Scipio Africanus as its hero, as well as the love poems and was passionate about raising Italian vernacular to the level of Latin; Ovid was himself exiled for at least partly (we think) political reasons; and Tibullus’ elegiac books start with a retreat to the countryside, but end up firmly back in urban Rome.

influential throughout Europe: after circulating in manuscript from 1481, it was printed in 1504, and its mix of prose and eclogues was a direct influence on Sidney's *Arcadia*. Less well known are Sannazaro's three books of elegies and epigrams, collected and published posthumously in 1535. Ralph Nash identifies references to Tibullus and Propertius in them; Michael Putnam also identifies the influence of Ovid and Catullus.⁷⁷ The Catullan intertexts are particularly striking.

Ad amicam alludes to Catullus 5 and 7: *da mihi, mea lux, tot basia rapta petenti | quot dederat vati Lesbia blanda suo*, 'my light, grant me in my desire as many kisses snatched from you as charming Lesbia had given to her poet' (1.57.1-2).⁷⁸ Sannazaro's elegy 1.3 reworks c.70 (incidentally, the first Catullan text to be translated into English by Philip Sidney in his *Certain Sonnets*): the Catullan original has *nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle | quam mihi, non si Iuppiter ipse petat*, 'the woman I love says that there is no-one whom she would rather marry than me, not if Jupiter himself were to woo her' (c.70.1-2); Sannazaro's imitation appears to switch the gender of the constant partner so we have, *nulla meos poterit mulier praeverttere sensus | ipsa licet caelum linquat, et astra Venus*, 'no woman will be able to draw away my affection, though Venus herself depart from the heavens and stars' (1.3.1-2). But the Catullan epigram has a bitter twist to it which is also encompassed in Sannazaro's re-writing - it ends, *dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti | in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua*, 'she says - but what a woman says to her ardent lover should be written in wind and running water' (Catullus 70.3-4). Sannazaro's text captures the trope of male constancy upon which elegy is built.

This Catullan epigram is of special interest to the discussion of chapter 1 as is Catullus' arresting use of *foedus*, 'contract, treaty, tie of friendship', within the context of his adulterous relationship with Lesbia.⁷⁹ This term is echoed in

⁷⁷ Nash (1996) 115-117; Putnam (2009) editorial notes.

⁷⁸ Quotations from Sannazaro are from Putnam (2009); cf. *Da mi basia mille, deinde centum / dein mille altera, dein secunda centum*, 'give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand, then a second hundred', *Cat.* 5.7-8. All quotations from Catullus are from Mynors (1958), translations from Goold (1989) unless stated otherwise.

⁷⁹ OLD *foedus* (2): formal treaty, compact, marriage bond, tie of friendship or hospitality.

Sannazaro's same elegy, 1.3, when he says *iam sanxere semel nos inter foedera divi / foedera ad extremos non solvenda rogos*, 'once, then, the gods ratified the compact between us, a compact not to be broken until the concluding funeral pyre'. That repetition of *foedera* within three words seems deliberate, and we will see why it becomes such a potent yet contested term in Catullus' verse, and what it might be doing, in the next chapter.

As well as imitating Catullus himself, Sannazaro also comments on the philological project undertaken by Italian humanists on Catullus' texts. In epigram 1.13 *De emendatione Catulli ad Iovianum* addressed to Giovanni Pontano, he writes:

doctus ab Elysia redeat si valle Catullus
ingratosque trahat Lesbia sola choros
non tam mendosi maerebit damna libelli
gestiet officio quam, Ioviane, tuo,
1.13.1-4

if learned Catullus were to return from the vale of Elysium, and Lesbia alone were to lead behind her thankless throngs, he will not so much bewail the losses in his blemished little book as he will exult in your service, Giovanni.

The imagery of Catullus returning from Elysium, where he had been left in Ovid's *Amores* 3.9, makes a tacit gesture linking Catullus to Ovid; and the idiom throughout Sannazaro's poems echoes that of Catullus himself (*da mi basia, mea lux, foedera, libelli*) as well as using the most common epithet, *doctus*, which both Ovid and Tibullus allocate to Catullus.⁸⁰

This interest in imitating elegy was certainly not confined to Renaissance Italy. The French Pléiade, the name adopted by Pierre Ronsard and six poet-friends in 1563, were as fascinated by Latin erotic elegy as the Italians.⁸¹ Du Bellay imitated Ovid's exile poems, which were written in elegiac metre, when he

⁸⁰ e.g. *Cat.* 1.1 *Cui dono lepidum novum libellum*, 'to whom am I to present my pretty new little book' - now 'blemished' in Pontano's time; *lux mea*, c.68a: 132, 160.

⁸¹ Francis I set up the Collège Royale in France in imitation of the Medicean academies in Florence: the Pléiade adopted their name to distinguish themselves as a sub-group of poets.

was in Rome between 1553-1557; Marot wrote versions of the *Heroides* (also written in elegiac metre); and Scève's *Délie* (1544), Du Bellay's *L'Olive* (1549), Ronsard's *Amours* (1552, 1553) and his *Sonets pour Hélène* (1578) were all heavily influenced by love elegy as well as Petrarch. *Délie*, the name of Scève's literary mistress, for example, seems to be drawn from Tibullus' Delia.

But what of sixteenth-century England?⁸² It is worth remembering that classical texts were generally imported into England from Europe including Venice, which was one of the centres of the printing trade, rather than being printed in England. The texts, commentaries and educational common-place books that have been discussed here would certainly have found their way to England, and informed English Petrarchan poetry, as much as European.⁸³ It is also the case that three of the English poets studied here - Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, John Donne - were well-travelled in Europe, with the first two being employed at various points in their lives as ambassadors of Henry VIII and Elizabeth respectively.⁸⁴ Mary Sidney, as sister to Philip and Robert Sidney, as wife to Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, and mother of William Herbert, one of the great Renaissance literary patrons, had access to the libraries of Penshurst, the Sidney family home, as well as Wilton, and was herself known as a patron of poets and writers.⁸⁵ She also had excellent Italian and French, and translated Petrarch and other works into English - the subjects of the fourth

⁸² Carr (1974) notes Chaucer's 'borrowing' from [Tibullus] 3.4 and argues that Chaucer had access to Salutati's manuscripts including those of Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus.

⁸³ See Wilson-Okamura (2010) 30, for example, on the way European readers, writers, scholars and commentators used the same editions and commentaries, and the importation of classical texts into England from Europe; also Green (2009) 33 on sixteenth-century English school and university texts being imported from Europe.

⁸⁴ Duncan-Jones (1991) traces Sidney's European travels to Strasbourg, Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Venice, Padua, Verona, Genoa, Florence, Prague, Pressburg (Bratislava) and Cracow, and speculates that he may have met Ronsard and du Bartas in Paris in 1572. He was in Venice for almost a year between 1573-1574, and is known to have been buying books there as well as from the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1573. It is also possible to track at least some of his travels from his extant correspondence: see Feuillerat (1962). Buxton (1954) 48 discusses Sidney's personal relationship with some of the Pléiade poets, and his friendship with Henri Estienne who edited and printed Greek and Latin texts in Paris; he also comments on Sidney's language skills and his ability to read Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish (75).

⁸⁵ For biographies, see e.g. Thomson (1964) on Wyatt, Duncan-Jones (1991) on Philip Sidney, Hannay (1990) on Mary Sidney, Bald (1970) on Donne.

chapter. There is also possible evidence of her having at least some Latin which is discussed in chapter 4. Specific evidence for these poets' engagements with Roman love elegy make up the body of readings to follow, but it is not hard to find the elegists being discussed by sixteenth-century English writers.

In 1523 John Skelton, poet laureate and former tutor to the young Henry VIII, described Catullus as a poet whose *pietas*, 'piety, duty, devotion' is to be commended.⁸⁶ John Leland, an epigrammatist also associated with the Henrician court, gives us a more expansive view of his knowledge of Catullus and the neo-Latin mediators of erotic elegy. In epigram 30 *Ad Catullum* we find: *sunt qui admirantur, sunt qui venerantur, et usque / carmina suspiciunt docte Catulle tua*, 'there are those who admire, those who revere and thoroughly esteem your poems, learned Catullus' (30.1-2).⁸⁷ The poem goes on to discuss Marullus and Pontano (*musa... Marulli*, 30.3; *Pontani musa*, (30.5), two of the Italian humanists already mentioned who are themselves imitators of Catullus. In epigram 237, too, *Castos esse decet poetas* whose title is itself an allusion to Catullus 16 (*nam castum esse decet pium poetam / ipsum, versiculos nihil necessest*, 'for the sacred poet ought to be chaste himself, though his poems need not be so', 16.5-6, an axiom repeated in Ovid's *Tristia*), Leland gives us an outline of the Latin elegiac tradition:⁸⁸

Lesbia lascivo placuit formosa Catullo
 Lesbia fulgentes candida pexa comas
 [...] delitiae Galli docti clarique poetae
 eximium nomen pulchra Lycoris habet.
 lactea Peligni floret Nasonis amica,

⁸⁶ On Skelton at Henry's court see Starkey (2008) 120-122. Bernard André, a colleague of Skelton's and tutor to Arthur, Henry's elder brother, describes Arthur as having read Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Silius, Plautus, Terence, Cicero, Quintilian, Thucydides, Livy, Caesar, Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny, Sallust and Ovid all by the age of sixteen - even allowing for some self-aggrandisement on the part of André, this gives us a good idea of the kind of classical literature available and being read by elite boys and men in the early part of the sixteenth century: Starkey (2008) 123. *OLD* on *pious* (1): faithful to one's moral obligations, dutiful, conscientious, upright, faithful.

⁸⁷ All quotations from Leland's epigrams are from Sutton at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/lelandpoems/>.

⁸⁸ On poetry and morality in Latin texts see also *Tristia* 2.35-116, and Pliny 4.14 to Paternus which quotes Cat.16.

Materiem numeris sueta Corynna dare:
 Cynthia laudatur deteresi nympa Properti
 237.1-2, 7-11

Pretty Lesbia pleased wanton Catullus,
 Lesbia fair with her shining tresses.
 [...] The delight of the famous and learned poet Gallus, fair
 Lycoris, has a fine name.
 The snow-white mistress of Ovid of Pelignum flourishes,
 Corynna wont to give matter for his verses.
 Cynthia is praised, nymph of the neat Propertius.

This epigram has a particularly notable ending: *Christicola at castos castus decantet amores / et sacros resonet Musa pudica thoros*, 'but the chaste Christian should sing of chaste loves, and the bashful muse should hymn consecrated bed' (237.16-17) which foregrounds the sometimes problematic nature of elegy as a model for imitation. Chapter 1 looks more closely at both Skelton and Leland, and receptions of Catullus in the early Tudor period.

Thomas Elyot in his *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531) wrote: 'Ovid, Catullus, Martial and all that rout of lascivious poets that wrote epistles and ditties of love, some called in Latin elegiae and some epigrammata - is nothing contained but incitation to lechery'.⁸⁹ Despite Elyot's apparent disapproval, he has clearly read the poets in detail, and is knowledgeable enough to organise them by genre. His sense of conflict about the elegists re-surfaces later in the same work: 'Ovid, that seemeth to be most of all poets lascivious, in his most wanton books hath right commendable and noble sentences'. Elyot negotiates a way to accommodate Ovid and his like: there is no need to abandon and stop reading these 'wanton poets' as long as it is possible to 'recite a great number of semblable good sentences' from their works.⁹⁰ This rather clever, if sly, way of recuperating Ovid and other erotic texts reveals an anxiety about love elegy which is an important strand in its reception, and which will be the subject of the next section of this introduction. For the moment, it is enough to note the 'get

⁸⁹ Vickers (1999) 65.

⁹⁰ Vickers (1999) 67.

out clause' that Elyot has permitted himself, a justification and an excuse for reading the erotic.

In view of Elyot's manoeuvrings, it is instructive to observe how Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's Latin and Greek tutor, reads Virgil's Dido episode: 'Virgil himself, in the story of Dido, doth wholly imitate Catullus in the manner of Ariadne'.⁹¹ Another reader who drew uncomfortable comparisons between the elegists and Virgil was John Stockward, a Tunbridge schoolmaster. In a sermon attacking the English school curriculum, he complained about the reading of 'Tibullus, Catullus and Propertius, Gallus, Martial... and a great parte of Ovid'.⁹² He goes on in the same speech to condemn the *Priapea* poems, at the time generally attributed to Virgil:⁹³ 'the most horrible beastliness of Priapus... joined to the end of every Virgil', where the accusation is itself built around sodomitical imagery, though whether this is intentional or not is hard to know. The next section of this introduction returns to this association between Virgil, elegy and the erotic, but it can already be seen that Renaissance readers unsettled the moral dichotomy between Ovid and Virgil which underpins some modern scholarship on Ovidian reception.⁹⁴ For sixteenth-century readers, Virgil's texts

⁹¹ From *The Schoolmaster* (1570), in Vickers (1999) 144. The reference is to *Cat.* 64.

⁹² The allusion to Gallus, whose works have been lost, is puzzling unless he means Virgil's *Eclogue* 10 where Gallus speaks as a character. Stockward's *A very fruiteful sermon preched at Paules Close the tenth of May last* was published in London in 1579, and is quoted in Kallendorf (2007) 373.

⁹³ Scaliger in 1572 had questioned the attribution and created the *Appendix Vergiliana* into which the *Priapea* poems were placed: see Reeve in Reynolds (1983), Burrow (2008), Wallace (2011). As late as 1591, however, Spenser wrote *Vergils Gnat*, based on the contested *Culex* from the *Appendix*, so the question of Virgilian authorship seems to have remained open.

⁹⁴ Hadfield (2003) separates the 'Virgilian' and 'Ovidian' in the *Faerie Queene* which he characterises as order and chaos respectively struggling for narrative control of the text. Brown (2004) 36-52 discussing the way Ovid was read in the 1590s, states that his texts were used to 'sanction' the erotic, that he was seen as the alternative to the 'authoritative Virgilian cultural archetype' (36). Pugh (2005) 1 agrees: in discussing the 'Ovidian' as opposed to the 'Virgilian' influence in Spenser's texts, she claims that Ovidian aspects encompass 'individualism, eroticism, playful irony and exilic discontent' while the Virgilian manifests as 'public-minded values, imperialist politics and serious political stance'. For these scholars, Virgil and Ovid are thus at extreme ends of a continuum: Ovid's textual voice is always subversive, Virgil's inescapably the authoritative and monolithic voice of political hegemony. Kallendorf (2007b) and Burrow (2008) writing about the 'other' Virgil, and of Virgil as the purported author of the *Priapea* poems have started to redress the balance and offer a more nuanced interpretation of the ways in which Virgil might be read in the early modern period.

might be interpreted to be as scurrilous and ‘wanton’ as Ovid’s and the other elegists’.

Fleeting references to elegy may be found in William Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* (1567), and William Webbe’s *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, but it is worth pausing on George Puttenham’s discussion of the genre in his *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589).⁹⁵ In chapter 11 of the first book he mentions Catullus as a lyric poet like Anacreon and Callimachus among the Greeks and Horace among Latin poets, then goes on: ‘there were another sort, who sought the favour of fair ladies, and coveted to bemoan their estates at large and the perplexities of love in a certain piteous verse called elegy, and thence were called elegiac: such among the Latins were Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius.’ He continues in chapter 24 of book 1 ‘the third sorrowing was of loves, by long lamentation in elegy (so was their song called), and it was in a piteous manner of metre, placing a limping pentameter after a lusty hexameter, which made it go dolorously more than any other meter.’⁹⁶ Puttenham here separates erotic elegy from mourning elegy with its associations of death, loss, departure.⁹⁷ He also recognises the intersection between form and content, identifying the classical elegiac metre which for the Latin poets was a marker of genre affiliation. Notably, he separates Catullus from the Augustan elegists. While Puttenham is, in strict terms, justified as Catullus does not always write in elegiac metre, this thesis reads Catullus as a kind of proto-elegist who sets the erotic framework which elegy proper comes to adopt.⁹⁸ That Catullus was so conceived by the elegists themselves as well as many Renaissance readers has already been seen.

⁹⁵ Painter’s second volume (1567) cites Propertius as the source of Painter’s ‘novels’, along with Ovid, Virgil, Pliny and a host of other classical writers; it also mentions how ‘Catullus was beguiled by Lesbia, Tibullus by Delia, Propertius by Cynthia, Naso by Corinna’. Webbe (1586) quotes Propertius on the writing of the *Aeneid* (*Prop.* 2.34.36), and talks about ‘many rare and excellent poets, wherof the most part writ light matters, as Epigrammes and Elegies, with much pleasant dalliance, among whom may be accounted Propertius, Tibullus, Catullus with divers whom Ovid speaketh of in divers places of his works’.

⁹⁶ Puttenham (2004) 96.

⁹⁷ See Pigman (1985).

⁹⁸ On the relationship between Catullus and elegy proper see McPeck (1939) 103, Johnson (2007) 186, Miller (2007) 399, Booth (1999) xi, Gutzwiller (2012).

The chapters to follow study English Renaissance receptions of elegy in close textual detail but it is worth briefly touching on two poets here whose imitations of elegy are not much discussed, those of Robert Sidney, brother to Philip and Mary, and Ben Jonson. Robert Sidney's poems are not always written in sonnet form and certainly rely on intertextual relations with his brother's *Astrophil and Stella* as well as other non-elegiac 'classical and continental models'.⁹⁹ It is worth noting, though, the way in which his depiction of love betrayed, and the perfidy of the beloved, owes a debt to erotic elegy and is quite different from the more usual Neoplatonic or Petrarchan model, or his brother's sequence where Astrophil is disappointed by Stella's chastity, not her duplicity.

Robert Sidney's so-called 'betrayal poems' (song 3, sonnets 16, 27, 29) are especially Catullan in mood and tone:

But I in searching out your truth did prove
 My true mishaps in your betraying love.
 Cruel, I love you still though thus betrayed
 Sonnet 16, 10-12

... and all too late
 I learn, when help is past, my sickness state
 Sonnet 27, 13-14

When you confessing faults, remission sought
 And for amends, large promises did make,
 But soon as I to my old bonds was brought,
 Trusting on so fair words, your word you brake.
 See then your purchase, your rich conquest see:
 You poison your own faith, to infect me
 Sonnet 29, 9-14

These texts of Robert Sidney might not present verbal echoes or explicit allusions to erotic elegy but the idiom of unfaithfulness and deception, the bitter articulation of love as a form of sickness or infection which cannot be shaken off, the resigned acceptance of the insincerity and unreliability of female words of love are typical of the Catullan Lesbia texts: *nunc te cognovi: quare etsi impensius*

⁹⁹ From Croft's introduction to his edition of Robert Sidney's poems (1984) 54.

uror | multo mi tamen es vilior et levior, ‘now I know you; and therefore, though I burn more ardently, yet you are in my sight much less worthy and lighter’ (c.72.5-6); *huc est mens deducta tua mea, Lesbia, culpa | atque ita se officio perdidit ipsa suo*, ‘to this point is my mind reduced by your perfidy, Lesbia, and has so ruined itself by its own devotion’ (c.75.1-2); *eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi... ipse valere opto et taetrum hunc deponere morbum*, ‘take away this plague and ruin from me... I would myself be well again and put away this baleful sickness’ (c.76.20 & 25). In sonnet 26, too, Robert Sidney writes ‘my love more dear to me than hands or eyes’ (9), an echo of Catullus 104.2 *ambobus mihi quae carior est oculis*, ‘of her who is dearer to me than both my eyes’.¹⁰⁰

These texts can thus be read as evidence of a parallel erotic model alongside the Petrarchan which exists in the sixteenth century. It is one which takes its nature and identity from Catullus and the elegists, and which erases Petrarch’s moralising reconfiguration of the wayward and morally corrupt elegiac mistress. As chapter 1 argues, this model of elegiac gendered relations is crucial to Wyatt’s erotics, and gives love elegy a central position in the depiction of Henrician love politics.

The second poet worth mentioning briefly in this introduction is Ben Jonson whose work sits just outside the sixteenth-century. Not usually considered a ‘love’ poet, Jonson yet wrote in a tradition which might be identified as ‘elegiac’, sometimes even naming his poems elegies. His *A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces* is notable for its ‘kiss’ poems deriving from *Catullus* 5 and 7, and his Celia poems advertise themselves as imitations of the same Catullan texts:¹⁰¹

Suns, that set, may rise again:
But if once we lose this light,
‘Tis, with us, perpetual night
Song.To Celia, 6-8¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ See also *Cat.*82 with its obsessive repetition of forms of *carus* and *oculus*.

¹⁰¹ See Strout (1984) on the Charis poems.

¹⁰² All quotations from Jonson are from Parfitt (1975, revised 1996).

Soles occidere et redire possunt:
 Nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
 Nox est perpetua una dormienda

Suns may set and rise again. For us, when the short light has once set,
 remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night
 Catullus 5.4-6

Although fitting the *carpe diem* form, the debt to Catullus is unmistakeable. 'To the Same' is a translation, a fusion and an 'Englishing' of *Catullus* 5 and 7:

... First give a hundred,
 Then a thousand, then another
 Hundred, then unto the tother
 Add a thousand, and so more:
 Till you equal with the store,
 All the grass that Romney yields,
 Or the sands in Chelsea fields,
 Or the drops of silver Thames,
 Or the stars that gild his streams,
 In the silent summer nights,
 When youths ply their stol'n delights.
 How to tell them as they flow,
 And the envious, when they find,
 What their number is, be pined.¹⁰³
 8-22

Da mi basia mille, deinde centum
 Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
 Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum

Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand
 then a second hundred, then yet another thousand, then a hundred
 Catullus 5.7-9

quam magnus numerus Libyssae harenae
 lasarpiciferis iacet Cyrenis

¹⁰³ It is interesting to note that Romney in Kent is close to Penshurst, the Sidney family home, and Chelsea was the home of the Dudleys, Mary Sidney's natal family and the source of Robert Sidney's title of Earl of Leicester after his uncle, Robert Dudley, died childless: see Roberts (1983) 16-17 on Jonson and the Sidney family. The 'Celia' poems appear in Jonson's *The Forest* just after his poem 'To Penshurst'.

oraculum Iovis inter aestuosi
 et Batti veteris sacrum sepulcrum
 aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox
 furtivos hominum vident amores,
 ... quae nec pernumerare curiosi
 possint nec mala fascinare lingua

As great as is the number of the Libyan sand that lies on silphium-bearing
 Cyrene, between the oracle of sultry Jove and the sacred tomb of old
 Battus; or as many as are the stars, when night is silent, that see the
 stolen loves of men... kisses, which neither curious eyes shall
 count up nor an evil tongue bewitch

Catullus 7.3-8,11-12

Jonson's knowledge of Catullus is displayed here. In his satire *Poetaster* (first performed 1600-1601) set in Augustan Rome, he parades his knowledge of the elegists more generally making Ovid and Tibullus characters in his drama alongside Horace, Gallus and Virgil.¹⁰⁴ In Act 1, scene 3 Ovid and Tibullus discuss their friend Sextus (Propertius) and agree that his social withdrawal is caused by the death of his beloved Cynthia. Later in the play, Ovid and Julia, Augustus' daughter, re-enact the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* (first printed 1597).¹⁰⁵ While the play is generally agreed to be a satirical weapon against Marston and Dekker with whom Jonson had an ongoing literary quarrel, it also reveals an acute knowledge of the Latin elegists and assumes that this is shared by his audience: the comedy, indeed, partly depends on us enjoying the spectacle of such earnest concern on the parts of Ovid and Tibullus for Propertius' Cynthia, a fictional elegiac character.¹⁰⁶ In 'An Ode' Jonson also speaks of the elegists:

Was Lesbia sung by learned Catullus?
 Or Delia's graces, by Tibullus?
 Doth Cynthia, in Propertius' song
 Shine more, than she the stars among?

¹⁰⁴ Mulvihill (1982), Donaldson (2011) 168-174.

¹⁰⁵ Julia, Augustus' daughter, was banished in 2 BCE for adultery; Ovid was possibly implicated in the banishment of the younger Julia, Augustus' granddaughter, in 8CE: see e.g. Thibault (1964), Boyle (2003) 4-6. The two Julias were, however, frequently confused or even conflated in the Renaissance: see Jonson's 'An Ode' 17-19, 'hath Corinna, by the name | her Ovid gave her, dimmed the fame | of Caesar's daughter'.

¹⁰⁶ On the 'war of the theatres' see Riggs (1989).

... Or hath Corinna, by the name
her Ovid gave her, dimmed the fame
of Caesar's daughter.

9-19

He goes on to place Petrarch's Laura, Ronsard's Cassandra, Sidney's Stella, and his own Celia into the same literary love tradition, thus linking them all explicitly to Roman love elegy.

Jonson is important not only in his own right as an imitator of erotic elegy, but because he links the Sidney family with John Donne, another of the poets whose texts we will be concerned with below. Jonson's 'long-standing friendship' with Donne is well documented, as is their mutual relationship with William Herbert, the son of Mary Sidney and nephew of Philip and Robert Sidney.¹⁰⁷ Donne and Jonson were also friends with Sir Henry Goodyere whose father had been at Zutphen with Philip and Robert Sidney, and who had been present at Sidney's premature death there in 1586 at the age of only thirty-two.¹⁰⁸ Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, is another link in this personal and intellectual network: a Sidney cousin, she was friends with Barbara Gamage, Robert's wife; a political ally of William Herbert; a friend of Mary Wroth, Robert Sidney's daughter; and patron to both Donne and Jonson.¹⁰⁹ Literary poetic tributes circulated amongst this group as well as, it seems, a shared reading of, and engagement with, Roman love elegy.¹¹⁰

So there is much evidence that Latin erotic elegy was a recognised, discussed and imitated genre before, during and after the sixteenth century amongst scholars, readers and writers. Far from prioritising Ovid, as modern

¹⁰⁷ On Jonson's biography including his literary friendships see Riggs (1989), now Donaldson (2011), on Donne, Bald (1970). Donaldson (2011) 103-4 speculates that Jonson joined Pembroke's Men in the early 1590s.

¹⁰⁸ Bald (1970) 171; on Sidney's death, see Duncan-Jones (1991), Stewart (2000).

¹⁰⁹ Bald (1970) 171, Brennan (1988) 135-140, Lewalski (1993) 95-123, Barroll (2001) 42-43.

¹¹⁰ For poetic tributes amongst this group see, for example, Donne's poems to the Countess of Bedford, Jonson's epigrams to Donne, to Lucy Harrington, to various members of the Sidney family, his poem 'To Penshurst', and to Mary Wroth. Donne wrote commendatory verses to Jonson's *Volpone* (1607) addressed to 'amicissimo and meritissimo Ben. Jonson'; Jonson dedicated his *Catiline* (1611) to William Herbert, as well as his 1612 quarto edition of *The Alchemist* and his 1616 *Epigrams* to Mary Wroth: Brennan (2002) 73.

scholarship tends to do, Renaissance readers positioned him in relation to Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus as well as Virgil - but a potentially wanton and disruptive Virgil who is not always acknowledged today. The educational treatises looked at here highlight the sometimes problematic nature of elegy, the anxiety that it might create, and the strategies which might have to be put in place in order to make it permissible, and allow it to maintain its position on the humanist curriculum. The next section looks more closely at how English writers thought and wrote about the fuzzy and problematic category of the 'erotic'.

0.4 Reading the erotic: 'to teach and delight'?

'Erotic' is a notoriously difficult term to pin down whether as a description or a critical term.¹¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 'of or pertaining to the passion of love; concerned with or treating of love; amatory'. What is deemed 'erotic' in literature (as in life) is relative and subjective. It is also shaped by, and understood through, historicised cultural and aesthetic norms.¹¹² Distinctions between what is defined as 'erotic', 'pornographic', or sexually explicit are difficult to delineate and tricky to enforce.¹¹³ The following chapters unpack some of the complexities of these categorisations. They also explore the tensions set up by the studied texts between the erotic and the transgressive, and the way literary eroticism may be used to interrogate, contest, possibly even subvert, social and cultural hierarchies. However thorny an issue, it is helpful to

¹¹¹ Early modern scholars have taken various approaches to defining the erotic: Daileader (1998) 5 distinguishes between 'the erotic' and 'the sexual' and defines the former as 'consummation of desire imagined or signified'; Talvacchia (1999) avoids a definition but maps the discourses where the erotic might shade into the 'pornographic' or obscene, and examines the terms which articulate this debate; Moulton (2000) works with the erotic as being concerned with 'the representation of sexual acts' (3), and with 'erotic writing' as referring to 'any text, regardless of genre or literary quality, that deals in a fundamental way with human physical sexual activity' (5). Brown (2004) avoids the term 'erotic' and instead looks at texts concerned with 'shame' and 'indecentcy'. Brulotte & Phillips (2006) take a panoramic view of 'erotic literature' defining it as texts 'in which sexuality and/or sexual desire has a dominant presence' (x).

¹¹² e.g. Brulotte & Phillips (2006) xi.

¹¹³ On the problematisation of 'pornography' as a category, see chapter 3; on early modern 'pornography', Moulton (2000).

consider the use of the term ‘erotic’ as it applies to the Latin and early modern texts under consideration here.

The only use of the term erotic elegy (*elegeia... erotica*) in the classical period is in Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*.¹¹⁴ In book 19, there is a dinner party at which the guests are entertained by a group of young singers: *iucundum in modum Anacreonteia pleraque et Sapphica et poetarum quoque recentium elegeia quaedam erotica dulcia et venusta cecinerunt*, ‘they sang in a most charming way several odes of Anacreon and Sappho, as well as some erotic elegies of more recent poets that were sweet and graceful’ (19.9.4.2-4).¹¹⁵ One of the Greek guests suggests that Latin literature does not have such *carminum delicias*, ‘exquisite, charming, or erotic poems’ (19.9.7.11-12) *nisi Catullus*, ‘except Catullus’ (19.9.7.12), but another guest, the Roman rhetorician Antonius Julianus, defends Latin literature claiming that it, too, has poetry about *amasios ac venerios*, on ‘lovers and Venus’. In this debate, erotic verse is associated with cultural refinement and sophistication, and Catullus is deemed to be at least the equal of, if not superior to, Anacreon and Sappho. The erotic is thus used in this instance to negotiate the relationship between Greek and Roman culture.

Prefacing the *editio princeps* of Catullus published in Venice in 1472 was a biography of the Roman poet:

Amavit hic puellam primariam Clodiam, quam Lesbiam suo appellat in carmine [...] Superiorem habuit neminem. In iocis apprime lepidus, in serio vero gravissimus extitit. Erotica scripsit.

¹¹⁴ Aulus Gellius was a miscellanist writing in the second century CE: his twenty-book *Noctes Atticae*, ‘Attic Nights’, contains extracts from a great number of Greek and Latin works, and quotes extensively from Cicero and Virgil, contemporaneous, respectively, with Catullus and the Augustan elegists. The text was known in manuscript from the 5th century CE, and the *editio princeps* was printed in Rome in 1469. There was a second Roman edition and a Venetian edition both in 1472, with the Venetian edition being reprinted twelve times before 1500. The Aldine edition was published in 1515.

¹¹⁵ Quotation and translation from Rolfe (1928): the Latin text gives ‘Anacreontia’ and ‘elegeia’ in Greek which has been transliterated here.

He loved Clodia, a girl of the first rank, whom he called Lesbia in his poems... No-one was his superior. In wit he was delightful, to the highest degree, and in serious matters, most truly grave. He wrote erotic verse.¹¹⁶

This extract from the biography of Catullus is discussed in more detail in chapter 1 but for now we should note the way in which Catullus is presented to his early modern readers: *erotica scripsit*, 'he wrote erotic poems'. This is especially striking since the word 'erotica' did not come into English usage until 1854, and its first use was as the title for the elegies of Propertius.¹¹⁷ Even the word 'erotic' is not used in English until 1668, although the derivative 'eroticall' is used slightly earlier in 1621.¹¹⁸ Instead, as we will see in a moment, terms such as 'wanton', 'lascivious', even 'scurrilous' are used by early modern writers to indicate the presence of problematic erotic material.

The 'erotic' takes, and may be found in, many literary forms in sixteenth-century England: 'Ovidian' epyllion such as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* or Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*; the 'Petrarchan' poetry with which we are concerned; bawdy and lewd ballads such as Nashe's *Choice of Valentines* which we will read in chapter 3.¹¹⁹ One of the concerns of this project is, therefore, to consider the hermeneutic and cultural possibilities of reading and writing the erotic. For the guests at Aulus Gellius' dinner party listening to recitations of erotic elegy is a way in which to mark their taste, style and civility. But the cultural presence of erotic poetry in Latin literature has a broader significance in this text: beyond the personal, it is also used as a symbol for the equality, at least, of Roman culture with Greek. What, then, and how might the erotic be made to mean in early modern England?

It has become a critical commonplace, even an orthodoxy, of Renaissance literary scholarship that the underlying principle of poetry in the period was that

¹¹⁶ Written by Gerolamo Squarzafico for Aldus Manutius, quoted in Wray (2001) 3: Wray's translation is slightly adapted here.

¹¹⁷ See *OED* entry for 'erotica'.

¹¹⁸ *OED* entry for 'erotic': 'eroticall' is first used by Richard Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

¹¹⁹ Also Moulton (2000) 6.

it should 'teach and delight'.¹²⁰ Certainly this is what many English Renaissance writers themselves tell us. For example, Elyot praises Homer for showing us 'not only the documents martial and discipline of arms, but also incomparable wisdoms and instructions for politic governance of people'.¹²¹ Spenser's often-quoted letter to Walter Raleigh which prefaced the 1590 edition of the *Faerie Queene* openly states that 'the general end therefore of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline'.¹²² As we have seen, Sidney's *Defence* gives poetry a didactic aim; and Puttenham also defines the subject matter of poetry as 'the praise of virtue and reproof of vice; the instruction of moral doctrine'.¹²³

This more or less general consensus derived from the literature of the period has led Brian Vickers, for example, to assert that a 'coherent theory of literature' existed in the Renaissance, which was derived from an epideictic commendation of virtue and condemnation of vice.¹²⁴ Literature, he asserts, has a role not just in the moral education of the individual, but also in creating a morally good society: 'that writers as diverse as Sidney and Heywood, Milton and Hobbes, should celebrate the power of poetry and drama to arouse a love of virtue and a desire to emulate it is further proof that Renaissance literary theory was perfectly coherent, being based on the union of rhetoric and ethics'.¹²⁵

But if this is true, how do we account for the presence of so much erotic poetry in the English literature of the sixteenth century? Why is Roman love elegy such a prominent model for imitation given the way in which it is described as wanton and lascivious even at the same time as it is learned? There is certainly evidence that Petrarch 'cleaned up' elegy, turning the promiscuous mistress of the Latin genre into the chaste and virtuous Laura - but English 'Petrarchan' poets such as Wyatt, Robert Sidney, and Donne revert to something much closer

¹²⁰ e.g. Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* 222.

¹²¹ *The Booke Named the Governour* in Vickers (1999) 57.

¹²² All quotations from the *Faerie Queene* are from Roche (1987), quotation from 15.

¹²³ *The Arte of English Poesy* in the Alexander edition (2004) 76.

¹²⁴ Vickers (1999) viii.

¹²⁵ Vickers (1999) 53.

to Roman elegy in their depictions of faithless (Wyatt, Robert Sidney) and sexually active (Wyatt, Donne) mistresses.

It is significant, too, that so much of this erotic verse is not written by marginal poets, but by the canonical: Wyatt, Sidney, Donne, Marlowe, Shakespeare. If a central function of literature in the sixteenth century is to stimulate the reader to emulate its morals, then what are we to learn from erotic verse and love sonnets? It is certainly not as simple as saying that imitations of elegy provide a negative example, that they reverse the moral direction and demonstrate bad behaviour which we should avoid - the excellence of the poetry partly takes issue with that argument - so there do seem to be more complex premises which make sense of this antithetical relationship between erotic love sonnets and the supposedly ethical role given to poetry in general.

This question of reading the erotic and exploring its hermeneutic possibilities in sixteenth-century love poetry is one of the concerns here. Renaissance *imitatio* may be a transformative process, and one which concerns itself with the body or matter of a text, rather than with literal borrowings - but what is at stake when the concerns of the 'source' text are explicitly, perhaps even uncomfortably, sexual? How might English Renaissance poets, concerned with the precept or defence of poetry that it exists to 'teach and delight', negotiate a relationship with literary eroticism? David Franz and, more recently, Bette Talvacchia, Ian Frederick Moulton and Georgia Brown have argued for rescuing the erotic, even the 'pornographic', from the margins of early modern studies and replacing it at the centre of Renaissance literary culture.¹²⁶ So one strand of this project is to read the texts under investigation not just as elegiac imitations, but as self-consciously erotic imitations of a genre which is intensely sexualised: what, this thesis asks, is the cultural potential of the erotic in sixteenth-century England; what - and how - might it be made to mean?¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Franz (1972), Talvacchia (1999), Moulton (2000), Brown (2004).

¹²⁷ Moulton (2000) and Brown (2004) have also addressed this question in different ways, and have been particularly concerned with the way in which erotic texts might be used to negotiate issues of identity, authorship and Englishness: neither of them, however, is concerned with classical reception or elegy.

Sir John Harington's 'Preface' to his translation of the *Orlando Furioso* is a rich source for framing this investigation as Harington navigates his way through the tricky, and sometimes contradictory, issues surrounding the erotic in literature.¹²⁸ In responding to poetry's detractors he remarks:

The last reproof is lightness and wantonness. This is indeed an objection of some importance since as Sir Philip Sidney confesseth, Cupido is crept even into the heroical poems, and consequently maketh that also subject to that reproof. I promised in the beginning not partially to praise poesy but plainly and honestly to confess that that might truly be objected against it, and if anything may be, sure it is this lasciviousness... As for the pastoral, with the sonnet or epigram, though many times they savour of wantonness and love and toying, and now and then, breaking the rules of poetry go into plain scurrility, yet even the worst of them may not be ill-applied and are, I must confess, too delightful.¹²⁹

Firstly, it is worth noting Harington's language here - lightness, wantonness, lasciviousness - all terms which are associated with Roman love elegy, a genre which might almost be said to self-consciously embody these characteristics. The sonnet and epigram, the most prevalent forms for the Renaissance imitation of erotic elegy, are openly associated by Harington with 'wantonness and love and toying', and, interestingly, in 'breaking the rules of poetry' as they embrace the scurrilous. Yet, even though they might transgress these implied moral rules, these poetic forms may still be 'too delightful' - where the excess expressed in that 'too' may even be attributed precisely to their illicit 'scurrility'.

Harington's 'delightful' seems deliberately chosen both for its more usual utilisation in the frequently-quoted formula 'to teach and delight', and also for the way in which it possibly contests this very axiom by pointing back to its provenance in Horace's *Ars Poetica*.¹³⁰ Horace's text does not couple these two concepts, but opposes them: *aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae*, 'poets

¹²⁸ The 'Preface' whose full name is *A Preface or rather, a Brief Apologie of Poetrie and of the Author and Translator of this Poem*, is given in full in Vickers (1999): all quotations are from this edition.

¹²⁹ Vickers (1999) 312.

¹³⁰ Vickers (1999) 11-12 emphasises the centrality of the *Ars Poetica* in this period as opposed to Aristotle's *Poetics* which was not translated into Latin until the middle of the sixteenth century.

want *either* to profit *or* to delight' (my emphasis).¹³¹ Harington's text thus foregrounds a complicated, even contradictory, response to the erotic in poetry: on one hand, it is frivolous, wanton, lascivious and scurrilous, qualities apparently to be disapproved of; on the other, it is the site for an eager and, perhaps, unruly readers' (and writers'?) pleasure.

Going on to talk specifically about the *Orlando Furioso* and the 'lascivious' in Ariosto, Harington says:

yea methinks I see some of you searching already for these places on the book, and you are half-offended that I have not made some directions that you might find and read them immediately.¹³²

This is a potent testament to the popularity and appeal of the erotic in literature which counters the idea of readers solely perusing texts for moral instruction: indeed, according to Harington, some readers would prefer to skim through the serious parts and go straight to the 'lascivious' bits.

Harington might be deliberately echoing Ovid in *Tristia* 2 talking about *Aeneid* 4:

*et tamen ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor
contulit in Tyrios arma virumque toros
nec legitur pars ulla magis de corpora toto,
quam non legitimo foedere iunctus amor
Tristia 2.533-6¹³³*

and yet the blessed author of your *Aeneid* brought his 'arms and the man' to a Tyrian couch, and no part of the whole work is more read than that union of illicit love.

Even taking into account the ironic tone and deliberately selective reading of the Ovidian narrator throughout the *Tristia*, both Harington and 'Ovid' draw attention to the appeal of the erotic in supposedly virtuous heroic poetry. It appears that both periods under consideration have a self-consciousness about the popularity of erotic episodes which co-exists with, and possibly undermines,

¹³¹ *Ars Poetica* 333.

¹³² Vickers (1999) 317.

¹³³ All quotations from the *Tristia* are from Owen (1963), translations from Wheeler, revised by Goold, 2nd edition (1988).

a more morally focused discourse on the practice of reading. On Ariosto's 'lascivious' episodes, Harington does, perhaps disingenuously, suggest that we should 'read them as my author meant them, to breed detestation and not delectation', a retreat to the didactic rhetoric that surrounds poetry. These terms, however, seem to define categories that are unnervingly close: Harington's preface seems to advertise the possibilities of detestation and delectation overlapping, or even being exchanged.

One of the defences that Harington uses to support and excuse Ariosto's eroticism is, unsurprisingly, the authority of classical models. Strikingly, however, he does not depend on Ovid, but on Virgil:

but as I say, if this be a fault, then Virgil committed the same fault in Dido and Aeneas's entertainment [manner of behaviour], and if some will say he tells that mannerly and covertly, how will they excuse that when Vulcan was entreated by Venus to make an armour for Aeneas?¹³⁴

This use of Virgil as the legitimator of the erotic supports the points made earlier about Renaissance readers not interpreting Ovid and Virgil as two extremes on a moral-erotic continuum: Virgil's texts can support and authorise the erotic in poetry just as much as the elegiac might.

The reason why Harington's preface is so pertinent to the concerns of this project is that he foregrounds the spaces that open up between what is said about poetry and its moral aim, and the actual practices adopted by writers and readers. There might certainly exist a prescriptive moral view of literature, that it should 'teach and delight', but in practice that delight may well be sited not in the virtuous, but in the wanton, the frivolous, and the lascivious. A quotation from Martial appropriated by Harington in his preface articulates some of the complexity that Renaissance readers and writers experience around literary eroticism: *laudant illa, sed ista legunt*, 'they praise those, but they read these'.¹³⁵ The treatises, commentaries, prefaces and defences of poetry tell a story, but

¹³⁴ Vickers (1999) 317-8; the references to Venus and Vulcan are from *Aen.* 8.387-90, 404-6. Harington also uses Chaucer to defend the erotic: the Miller's and Wife of Bath's tales, he remarks, 'both in words and sense incurreth more the reprehension of flat scurrility' (318).

¹³⁵ Martial 43.10.

not a complete one: poetry may masquerade beneath a mask of morality but its true delight may come from the way in which it opposes and undermines the ethical stance which allows it to exist and to be culturally valorised. One locus of this tension between the prescriptive and the actual practice of writing and reading is erotic love poetry.

The four chapters which follow are constructed around close and detailed readings of one or two elegiac texts which are then read with one or two Renaissance poems which renew and revitalise the concerns of elegy for a sixteenth-century English audience. Chapter 1 concentrates on how the concerns of Catullus' proto-elegiac texts from the mid-50s BCE inform the erotic and cultural dynamics of Wyatt's love poetry. Focusing on gendered images of speech - the impotent or unreliable tongue, verbal duplicity, broken oaths and overt lies - it examines how issues of speaking are turned into ethical markers which can be mapped onto the spectrum of gender. Contextualising the poetry from the two periods against, respectively, one of Cicero's forensic speeches, and Henry VIII's love letters, it especially investigates how modes of speaking are used to contest or uphold the idea of masculinity as a moral state, not just a gender position: what it might mean to speak 'like a man' in Republican Rome and Henrician England.

The second chapter turns to Propertius and Philip Sidney and, taking its cue from Cynthia as the eroticised muse of Propertian poetry, and the scornful muse of *Astrophil and Stella* 1, explores metaliterary themes of poetic practice. Reading the muse as a figure for ideas of inspiration and creativity, for authority and canonicity, we will consider how the selected texts negotiate, articulate and configure ideas about the nature, identity and cultural function of poetry in Augustan Rome and Elizabethan England.

Chapter 3 investigates how Donne's 'To His Mistress Going to Bed' and Thomas Nashe's *Choice of Valentines* make cultural use of *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7, before turning reception on its head and reconsidering what a reading of

Donne's elegy and Nashe's provocative text might reveal about Ovid's poems. Framing the analysis through articulations of power and impotence, we will see how literary representations of sexual performance or failure reveal covert engagements with questions of politicised myth-making and story-telling. Sex will be read as a vocabulary which has a potent place in the support and subversion of the Augustan and Elizabethan regimes.

The fourth chapter is concerned with Sulpicia's female authored elegies, and Mary Sidney's translations of Petrarch's *Triumph of Death*, and of Robert Garnier's *Antonie*, both texts which make prominent use of a female voice of desire. It analyses how previous instances of ventriloquised female voices in male authored elegy and Renaissance love poetry open up a space into which it is possible for a female author to insert herself. Of special interest will be the question of what happens when the female beloved speaks up, speaks back, speaks for herself. The chapter thus investigates the way in which female voices serve to weaken, overturn or even undo dominant master-narratives of elegy and the Petrarchan, sparking moments of crisis and revelation within the texts which have not received due critical attention to date.

The poets and texts read here are canonical ones, and the very familiarity of them serves to foreground the over-arching argument of this project: that by changing the intertextual framework through and against which these texts are read, we also open up the texts themselves, allowing new ways of reading and understanding them to emerge into focus.

Chapter 1

‘For truth and faith in her is laid apart’: women’s words and the construction of masculinity in Catullus and Wyatt

But I perceive I lacked discretion
To fashion faith to words mutable;
Thy thought is too light and variable
6.11-13¹

The error to which the narrator confesses in this poem by Wyatt is that he has been faithful to a woman whose own words of love are fickle, changeable and unreliable: ‘words mutable’. The moral worthlessness of his mistress is one of the keynotes of Wyatt’s love poetry: ‘for truth and faith in her is laid apart’, 3.11; and ‘the holy oath whereof she taketh no cure | broken she hath’, 1.3-4.² That the ‘holy oath’ is a vow of love is made clear from the context as the poem is addressed to ‘Love’ in the form of Cupid with his weapons (6) and bow (11). This depiction of a mistress who is tainted and duplicitous marks a divergence of Wyatt’s texts from the Petrarchan model with which they are usually read.³ Petrarch’s Laura may be cool and aloof but she is also positioned as a laudable object of the narrator’s desire - indeed, her very remoteness is itself a symbol of her chastity and virtue.⁴ It is striking that Wyatt articulates the moral defects of his women in specifically verbal terms as faulty acts of speech: their words are ‘mutable’, their vows ‘broken’. The combination of ‘mutable’ and ‘variable’ in the quotation above recalls the words of Mercury about Dido in *Aeneid* 4 (*varium et mutabile semper / femina*, ‘a fickle and changeful thing is woman ever’, *Aeneid*

¹ All quotations from Wyatt are from Rebholz (1978, revised 1997): the numbering of poems are from the 1997 edition.

² ‘Wyatt rarely admires those he loves’, Thomson (1964) 130.

³ For example, Southall (1964), Estrin (1984), Dubrow (1995), Heale (1998), Cheney (2011). Some scholars have read Wyatt’s fickle mistress as a coded way of talking about the capricious nature of fortune at court, or Henry VIII himself: Kamholz (1978), Marotti (1982), Heale (1998). Surrey’s Petrarchan verse is notably closer to Petrarch in that his lady is chaste (6), modest (13), honourable and virtuous (16): poem 16, titled by Tottel, draws attention to this model: ‘The lover comforteth himself with the worthinesse of his love’: numbers and titles of Surrey’s poems are taken from *Tottel’s Miscellany* (1557) which also printed a selection of Wyatt’s love poetry.

⁴ See e.g. Thomson (1964), Estrin (1984), (1994) on the idealisation of Laura.

4.569-70) - a verdict perhaps contested by the *Aeneid* itself - but also evokes the flawed yet fascinating Lesbia of Catullus upon whose vows and promises the narrator can never depend. Catullus 70, for example, puts female verbal duplicity at its heart:

*Nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle
quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.
dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti
in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.*
70.1-4

The woman I love says that there is no one whom she would rather marry than me, not if Jupiter himself were to woo her. Says; - but what a woman says to her ardent lover should be written in wind and running water.⁵

The conspicuous repetition of *dicit*, 'she says', is striking in this epigram: used three times in just four lines, including twice in line 3, it reverberates throughout this short text, drawing insistent attention to the importance of the act of speaking. The syntax of the third line with the stop after that first *dicit* accentuates the word further, before the last two lines pronounce their stinging indictment on the reliability and trustworthiness of 'her' words.⁶

By not naming Lesbia, by calling her *mulier mea*, this text assumes an aphoristic status - that it is not just Lesbia's words which cannot be trusted but those of all women: that 'woman' is a cultural category tainted, mythically and proverbially, with the charge of verbal unreliability and deviousness.⁷ This is not, of course, an original position: there are many literary texts which assert the duplicity of women prior to Catullus - Clytemnestra, Helen, Medea, Phaedra are

⁵ All quotations from Catullus are from Mynors (1958), translations from Cornish, revised by Goold (1995). Dates for Catullus are provisional: see Skinner (2003) xx for a discussion of the problems of dating: she suggests 54 BCE for poems 66-116; Gaisser (2009) 5 places the dateable poems between c.57-54 BCE; Catullus is thus a contemporary of Cicero and Julius Caesar, both of whom are mentioned in the poems (e.g. cc. 49, 57).

⁶ The punctuation in the third line is modern, of course, but the syntax still isolates and foregrounds that *dicit*.

⁷ Dyson Hejduk (2008) 4-9 notes a shift from *puella*, 'girl, girlfriend', being the dominant term for Lesbia in cc.1-60 (e.g. 2.1, 3.17, 8.4), to *mulier*, 'woman', in 66-116; Skinner (2003) xxiv also reads Lesbia as a projection of 'woman' as a category but is more concerned with the illicit sexuality associated with her. Both assume, as this chapter does, the unnamed mistress in this poem to be Lesbia.

just a few examples of female characters from Greek literature who epitomise this cultural notion.⁸ What this chapter is concerned with is, firstly, how this trope of female verbal unreliability is used by Catullan texts and given a resonance specific to the context in which the poems were first written; and, secondly, how this concept is renewed in Wyatt's texts for an audience in the Henrician court. In tracing a discourse of speech-acts in Wyatt's poetry, this chapter builds on what Greene has described as Wyatt's concern with 'linguistic disarray' and 'trouthe' but, taking its lead from Catullus, analyses these in specifically gendered terms.⁹ If the words attributed to women are shown to be deceptive, untrustworthy and essentially meaningless, then what might it mean to speak like a man?

Section 1.1 explores Catullus' Lesbia poems and looks at how her acts of speaking are represented. It is especially concerned with the idea of female verbal corruption and considers how this is put to work to calibrate and authenticate the masculine status of the narrator. Section 1.2 contests the generally accepted claim that Catullus' English reception starts with Philip Sidney's translation of c.70 in his *Certain Sonnets*.¹⁰ Instead, it argues for an English Catullan presence far earlier than this, in the poetry of John Skelton, and the epigrams of John Leland.¹¹ The evidence reviewed in this section thus gives Catullus a previously unexplored position in early Tudor culture. Wyatt's own Catullan receptions are the subject of section 1.3 which examines how the terms through which speech acts are gendered are re-worked and revitalised to have specific resonance and applicability to the politics of love in the Henrician court.

⁸ e.g. Clytemnestra in the *Odyssey* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; Helen in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Medea in Euripides' *Medea*; Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

⁹ Greene (1982) 255. Also Hannen (1974) 51-57 on the problematisation of eloquence in Wyatt's poetry.

¹⁰ On Catullus in England see Duckett (1925), McPeck (1939), most recently Gaisser (1993, 2001, 2009). Blevins (2004) traces what he terms a Renaissance poetic 'affinity' with Catullus but his work is not 'an enquiry into the Renaissance imitation of Catullus' (15).

¹¹ Gaisser (2009) 194-5 certainly argues that Catullus was likely to be known in England from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century but reads Skelton as responding to Italian imitations, and makes no mention of Leland's epigrams; her first citation is Nicholas Udall's 1533 *Floures for Latin Spekyng* which comments on c.84. For a reappraisal of Skelton and fifteenth-century English humanism, see Tonry (2008).

The poetry of both Catullus and Wyatt has been read biographically as texts which document their respective love affairs with Clodia Metelli and Anne Boleyn.¹² Given Catullus' own warning from c.16 that we should not confuse the poetry with the poet (and the consequences of doing so), this biographical approach is certainly unsustainable and is a position from which modern scholars have generally moved.¹³ However, the striking resemblances between Catullus' Lesbia and the Clodia Metelli of Cicero's *Pro Caelio*, as well as the more generalised parallels between the women in Wyatt's poetry and textual representations of the historical Anne Boleyn do still need to be accounted for, and without recourse to simplistic readings of the poems as autobiographical documents akin to the diary entries of love-struck young men. The approach taken here is to explore the way the literary, the political and the personal might 'project into' each other; the way poetry, forensic oratory and personal letters might draw on similar rhetorical, cultural and ideological models, in this case on the question of the reliability of female words - words attached or attributed to female characters - to make their points.¹⁴

To consider this argument more fully, Catullus' verse is here contextualised against the *Pro Caelio*, and Wyatt's against the love letters written by Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn. Through detailed readings we will uncover how both sets of texts are linked via their positioning of female words as unreliable, sometimes

¹² Skinner (2003) 82-95 tackles the teasing identification of Lesbia as one of the Clodias in c.79; Dyson Hejduk (2008) 4-9 summarises the debate to date over the identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli; Gaisser (2009) 1 comments on the 'deceiving' accessibility of Catullan verse, and the way in which it encourages us to feel we 'know' the authentic Catullus. Ives (2004) documents the historical relationship between Wyatt and Anne Boleyn but at least partially resists reading the poetry as purely autobiographical; as late as 2011, however, Cheney (2011) 102 discusses 'Whoso List to Hunt' as being about the historical Anne Boleyn, and states unproblematically that Wyatt was in love with Anne and thus was in competition with Henry VIII for her regard (127).

¹³ Catullus' own verse prompts a separation between poet and poetry: *nam castum esse decet pium poetam | ipsum, versiculos nihil necessest*, 'for the sacred poet ought to be chaste himself, though his poems need not be so', 16.5-6: Leland's epigram 237 makes a direct allusion to this when he states *castos esse decet poetas*, 'poets should be chaste'.

¹⁴ Gildenhard (2007) on Cicero's use of literary tropes in his forensic speeches discusses the way the literary and political 'project into' each other, quotation from 150. Hannen (1974) 45 positions poetry as a 'sub-division of rhetoric' so that non-fictional genres might draw on literary figures and vice versa.

opaque, and ultimately untrustworthy. Literary love narratives are thus shown in this chapter to be productive interpretative frameworks for reading what are supposedly non-fictional texts, in this case a legal speech and a set of letters.¹⁵ The representation of female speech-acts, as will be seen, can be put to use by male writers across a range of genres to interrogate and construct what it means, in late Republican Rome and the early Tudor period, to speak like a man.

1.1 'Written in wind and running water': the problematics of female speech in *Catullus* 70, 83, 76, 109

C.70, quoted in full above, is itself an imitation and re-writing of epigram 11 by Callimachus, and a comparison of the two underlines the changes that the Catullan text makes to foreground its own concerns.¹⁶

Kallignotos swore to Ionis that he would never love
Anyone, male or female, more than her.
He swore, but it's true, what they say: the vows
Of lovers never reach the ears of the gods.
Now he burns for a boy, and the poor girl
(as they say) is out in the cold.¹⁷

The most obvious alteration is that of gender: Callimachus' text exposes a male lover's broken vows to a girl. Julia Gaisser, discussing the relationship between this poem and c.70, concentrates on the way in which 'Catullus' is cast in the

¹⁵ On literary narratives as a structuring device in the *Pro Caelio*, see Geffcken (1973), Leigh (2004), Harries (2007), Gildenhard (2007), Tatum (2011). On literary models for Tudor letters, see Stevens (1961), Whigham (1981), Lerer (1997), Schneider (2005).

¹⁶ Callimachus was a 3rd century BCE Hellenistic poet associated with the Alexandrian court: his aesthetic of short poems, discontinuous, diverse, deeply allusive and polished is an important one for the 'neoterics' as well as the elegists proper. Catullus' c.66 is a translation of Callimachus, and he is mentioned in c. 116, Catullus' last poem. He is also invoked in Propertius 3.1.1, and his *Aetia*, now extant only in fragments, seems to have stood behind Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*. On the neoterics, see Lyne (1978), Booth (1999) xxv-xxvii, Johnson (2007); on Callimachus, Acosta-Hughes & Stephens (2012); on Callimachus, Catullus and elegy, Hunter (2006), Knox (2007), Nelis (2012), Gutzwiller (2012).

¹⁷ Translation by Nisetich, quoted in Gaisser (2009) 135; also in Knox (2007) where it is designated as epigram 25 Pf.

female role, the 'poor girl' betrayed by her male lover.¹⁸ However, the representation of gender in Catullus' version is more nuanced and complex than a simple inversion, as will be seen shortly. Secondly, the Callimachean generalised notion of 'the gods' as guarantors of lovers' vows is made particular in c.70 where it is specifically Jupiter who is brought into the text: a problematic figure to invoke in this context, given his rather chequered erotic history in classical mythology. Thirdly, while Kallignotos swears love, he does not explicitly mention marriage, a cultural ritual which shifts the idea of love from the personal and individual to the social and public.

Written in elegiac couplets, the same metre used by Callimachus, Catullus' text forces itself into a dynamic relationship with Callimachus' poem, one as concerned with the differences between the epigrams as the similarities. Epigram 11 confirms the implied outcome of c.70 and assures us that Lesbia's words will not hold, that she will maintain her infidelity whatever she says. However, notable additions in the Catullan poem give emphasis to the ephemeral nature not just of Lesbia's words but of speech articulated by a woman, and give the notion of oaths and vows a broader social context in which to operate by explicitly associating Lesbia's words with the bonds of marriage.

Turning back to c.70 with the Callimachean epigram in mind foregrounds the way in which the Catullan poem is constructed from a cluster of implied voices attached to various characters and texts: the reported speech of Kallignotos and of Lesbia; the reminder of mythic, if unspoken, words of Jupiter; the words of Callimachus and the Callimachean narrator; and the direct words of the narrator himself, 'Catullus', which comprise the text of the poem. This issue of voice, and the clash of voices that emerge from and within the texts under consideration is one to which we will return throughout this thesis: for now, it is worth noting that c.70 is itself a text which is self-consciously constructed from a blend of voices.

¹⁸ Gaisser (2009) 136.

Lesbia's reported claim that she would marry no-one other than 'Catullus', not even Jupiter himself, is an easy one for her to make, at least if, as c.83 tells us, she is already married.¹⁹ So, of course, is Jupiter. From classical myth, we know Jupiter to be an infamously unfaithful husband whose notorious wooings cannot end in marriage because he already has a wife in Juno.²⁰ Lesbia's reported speech places her in the potential position of one of the numerous mythic characters who are the objects of Jupiter's lustful desire ('if Jupiter himself were to woo her'), but, critically, also turns her into a female analogue of Jupiter himself, at least in terms of sexual fidelity. Like the god's, Lesbia's promises of love are themselves indicators of deceit, serving to violate her prior vows of marriage. While Jupiter's masculinity, however, is not compromised by - may even be valorised through - his extra-marital affairs, the correlation between Lesbia's sexuality and gender is more problematic. Her infidelity confirms her status alongside mythically unfaithful women (Clytemnestra, Helen), and it separates her from authoritative exemplars of femininity built on chastity and virtue: Penelope, Andromache. Lesbia's words to 'Catullus' ('no one whom she would rather marry than me') are themselves a transgressive form of wooing, traditionally a male act, a way of binding her lover closer to her as she invokes an idea of marriage to which she cannot, in truth, be bound. Her statement of commitment is a devious one which she cannot uphold and, importantly, one to which he cannot hold her. Already we can see a complex discourse emerging which centres on questions of gender, sexuality, speech and broken vows.

¹⁹ *Lesbia mi praesente viro mala plurima dicit*, 'Lesbia says many hard things to me in the presence of her husband' (83.1). For debates on the ordering of the poems see Skinner (1981), (2007b), Hutchinson (2012). Du Quesnay & Woodman (2012) 268 discusses papyrological evidence that Roman readers copied out poems for their own reading therefore upsetting any authorial organisation: these individual reading copies parallel, to some extent, sixteenth-century manuscripts and common-place books and upset the idea that authorial ordering was crucial to interpretation.

²⁰ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the canonical Roman retelling of classical myth cycles which foregrounds Jupiter's extra-marital infidelities: as an inheritor of Catullus' erotic poetics, Ovid may himself be responding to c.70 in an expansive and grand manner.

Lesbia's words in this poem foreground a treacherous separation between word and action. It is not just that her words of love are potentially deceptive, but that they deliberately bring into play social and cultural rituals and obligations, such as those of marriage negotiations and contracts, more typically discussed and settled between men.²¹ By negating the efficacy and reliability of words upon and through which social relationships are built and sustained, Lesbia threatens to undermine the very structure of Roman elite society.

Lesbia's words, the narrator comments bitterly, 'should be written in wind and running water' (*vento, rapida... aqua*, 4) thus emphasising the ephemeral nature of her verbal commitment and matching it to the most evanescent of media. The implicit contrast is with the narrator's own words fixed, even if only temporarily, on *codicillos*, 'writing tablets' in c.42, or in the *lepidum novum libellum* | *arida modo pumice expolitur*, 'pretty new book, freshly smoothed off with dry pumice-stone' in c.1 which the narrator prays will 'live and last for more than one century' (*plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*, 1.10).²² The hoped-for permanence of the narrator's textual words is thus made to signify a quality of reliability and trustworthiness in the emotional tenor of his speech, a verbal integrity which is conspicuously missing from Lesbia's words which are associated with the fleeting, the momentary and the impermanent.

This epigram ends on a cutting and embittered note of rebuke, exposing the capricious nature of Lesbia's words. So if Lesbia, or 'woman' as a category, can be at least partially defined by the transient and temporary nature of her sayings, then what of Catullan masculinity? The rest of this section goes on to explore in detail the discourse of speech and gender identified in c.70 and considers how it is used to negotiate and construct a version of Roman masculinity.²³ William Fitzgerald and, especially, David Wray have also discussed

²¹ See Treggiari (1991) on Roman marriage; Fitzgerald (1995) 117-120 on the 'language of aristocratic obligation' which is utilised in Catullus.

²² C.42.19,20,24; c.1.1-2, 10. *Expolitur*, 'polished', is also a word used by Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) about Wyatt's verse: he 'greatly polished our rude and handy manner of vulgar Poesie', though whether this is a deliberate allusion to Catullus is hard to tell: Puttenham quoted in Heale (1998) 1.

²³ On Roman manliness, McDonnell (2006).

indicated not by what she says, but only by twisting her words to mean the opposite of what they appear to articulate. 'Catullus' interprets Lesbia's angry words as displaced words of love, while he positions her husband as hermeneutically dense (*nihil sentis?*, 'do you understand nothing?', 3). This position is complicated by the reader's response to the poem, our own interpretative stance, where we might question or reject 'Catullus' attribution of meaning. The wicked things that Lesbia says about her lover in front of her husband might indeed be a cover for an adulterous passion about which she cannot keep quiet; equally, however, they may be the words of a woman angry with her lover, frustrated that he insists on haunting her when she does not want him around. What is important here is the emphasis this text gives to questions of Lesbia's speech and the problematic interpretation of a woman's words.

What Lesbia says, in other poems as well as this one, is slippery in the extreme: what are the *mala*, 'wicked things' that she says to 'Catullus'? Do they mean one thing if spoken in front of her husband, and another if her husband is absent? If her words can only be interpreted according to their context then, this poem seems to imply, her speech is contingent, not stable or reliable, free-floating and able to be appropriated to differing interpretations. The drama performed in this text is not just a love triangle, but a hermeneutic crisis which is enacted before our eyes. Lesbia's husband accepts her words as they appear: 'hard things' are, to him, bad things spoken about 'Catullus' which he takes pleasure in hearing (*maxima laetitia est*, 2). To 'Catullus', however, they are covert words of passion, words which indicate Lesbia's emotional commitment to him. To be silent, he argues, would be an indicator of indifference; to speak is to be passionately engaged (*uritur et loquitur*, 6), even if what is spoken is *mala*.

So what we witness in this poem are two instances of interpretation in action, on the part of the husband and of the lover - while Lesbia's words and any intended meaning remain opaque. The two men in the poem each tie these words down to a single, defined sense, though 'Catullus' perhaps has to work quite hard to defend his reading. Neither interpretation, however, succeeds in

taking precedence over the other, and the text itself, as well as Lesbia's words, remains tantalisingly full of possibilities. It is not so much that Lesbia's speech is incomprehensible, rather that it can be heard in varying ways: either that she is sincere in maligning 'Catullus', or that she is being deceptive in appearing to criticise him in front of her husband. The two male characters settle on their meanings, but as readers we cannot: the question of who is the foolish one (*fatuo*, 2), who understands nothing (*nihil sentis*, 3), is left finally unresolved, and the positions of the husband and the lover become interchangeable in hermeneutic terms. The text, like Lesbia herself, remains ultimately elusive and enigmatic.

C.83 aligns Lesbia's slippery and untrustworthy speech with her corrupt sexual morals so that the multiple meanings which can be attributed to her words reflect, to some extent, the numerous men with whom she has sexual liaisons.²⁷ In this way, words and speech become moral emblems. If Lesbia's utterances serve to condemn her out of her own mouth, some of the other poems are more concerned with delineating the contours of Catullan masculinity through the form of speech. C.76, one of the most disillusioned poems in the Lesbia 'cycle' does precisely this.

The poem opens by giving us a 'checklist' of Catullan virtues:

Siqua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas
est homini, cum se cogitat esse pium,
nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere nullo
divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines
76.1-4

If a man can take any pleasure in recalling the thought of kindness done, when he thinks that he has been a true friend; and that he has not broken sacred faith, nor in any compact has used the majesty of the gods in order to deceive men

Esse pium, translated here as being a 'true friend' has a much denser meaning encompassing being conscientious, upright, faithful, patriotic, loyal, dutiful,

²⁷ As asserted by, for example, the three hundred lovers of c.11, Egnatius in c.37, Rufus in c.77, Quintius in c.82 etc., as well as the husband and lover of c.83.

righteous, pious, and devout.²⁸ *Fidem*, too, from *fides*, ‘faith, loyalty, honesty, honour’, is a resonant word in Roman culture, a ‘cardinal virtue’ which has religious associations linking it to the idea of a sacred trust which underpins oaths, contracts and treaties.²⁹ Scholars have noted that Catullus is the first writer to shift the concept of *fides* from the legitimate trust that supports political, social and commercial transactions and relationships to the semantic field of sexual fidelity: particularly, the socially dissonant context of ‘Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia, one which is adulterous and dangerously erotic.³⁰ The third highly freighted term used in this text is *foedere*, ‘contract, compact, promise, even marriage-bond’, again transformed in Catullan usage to a specifically extra-marital, eroticised context: as Marilyn Skinner remarks, *foedus amicitiae* becomes the ‘central elegiac trope’ of Catullus’ verse.³¹ The reference to not using the power of the gods to abuse or deceive should also be noted, a comment which speaks to the Jupiter reference in c.70 discussed earlier. Both William Fitzgerald and Marilyn Skinner have documented Catullus’ use of what Fitzgerald calls ‘the language of aristocratic obligation’: what we are concerned with is how these terms are made to intersect with the discourse of speech and gender being traced here.³²

²⁸ *OLD pius*: (1) faithful to one’s moral obligations, dutiful, conscientious; (2) devout, faithful to religious obligations; (3) loyal, faithful to familial and social obligations. Virgil’s *pius Aeneas* thus encompasses the qualities which underpin the Augustan ideal of Roman masculinity: for Virgil’s engagement with Catullan terms and texts see Hardie (2012), Meyers (2012).

²⁹ *OLD fides*: (5) good name; (6) to observe one’s obligations, good faith, honesty, honour; (7) sincerity; (8) loyalty. On *fides* in Roman cultural discourse see Galinsky (1996) 61, 272; also Corbeill (2005) who traces the discourse of *fides* in *Propertius* 1.16, and its opposite, *perfidia*, in *Prop.* 1.15 and 2.24 where it is associated with Cynthia, the dissolute mistress of ‘Propertius’. There was a temple of *Fides* located on the Capitoline: Corbeill (2005).

³⁰ e.g. Fitzgerald (1995) 117-120, Galinsky (1996) 272, Skinner (2003), Corbeill (2005) 90.

³¹ *OLD foedus*: (1) formal treaty; (2) compact, undertaking; (3) marriage bond; (4) tie of friendship or hospitality. Skinner (2003) 83. Virgil’s Aeneas uses *foedus* as a point of contestation in the scene where Dido learns that he is leaving Carthage: *nec coniugis umquam | praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni*, he says, ‘I never held out the bridegroom’s torch nor entered such a compact’, *Aen.* 4.338-39 - another instance where we can trace Virgil’s reception and use of Catullus. Thompson (1964) 145 points out Wyatt’s conception of ‘love as a bargain, a bond conferring rights and demanding obligations’, though she makes no connection to Catullus. This is another divergence from the form of love articulated in Petrarch which assumes and requires no reciprocity.

³² Fitzgerald (1995) 117-120, Skinner (2003). See also Krostenko (2001) on the ‘language of social performance’ in Catullus and Cicero.

All of the aspects of virtuous conduct listed by this text are summarised as being performed by word or deed, *aut dicere... aut facere* (7-8), and, in a self-addressed speech, 'Catullus' confirms that he has said as well as done what is required of him: *haec a te dictaque factaque sunt*, 'these things have been said and done by you' (8). That repetition of *dicere* and *dicta* emphasise that what is spoken is at least as crucial as what is done. What this poem stages is a vocal performance of moral uprightness and integrity.

If 'Catullus' claims his words to be reliable and trustworthy, then the foil against which he measures them are Lesbia's broken vows. She is the unnamed exemplar who has, unlike the Catullan narrator, 'broken sacred faith' (*sanctam violasse fidem*, 3), she is the source of the 'ungrateful love' (*ingrato... amore*, 6) who has refused to reciprocate, to uphold the compact of love that he has sought to build between them. The poem ends with an acknowledgement that to expect fidelity from Lesbia is impossible:

*non iam illud quaero, contra me ut diligat illa,
aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit*
76.23-24

No longer is this my prayer, that she should love me in return, or, for
that is impossible, that she should consent to be chaste

In positioning Lesbia as refusing to enact the qualities of *fides* and *pietas*, to acknowledge the *foedus* that 'Catullus' wants to generate in words between them, Lesbia serves to throw the verbal integrity of 'Catullus' into relief. While certainly these terms - *fides*, *pietas*, *foedus* - are being used in a transgressive way in being applied to an extra-marital erotic relationship, the Catullan texts re-orient them so that they can reclaim some of the moral standing that they would have in more customary use. As words which are routinely deployed to uphold and venerate social and political relationships typically, though not exclusively, between men, these terms serve to recuperate and even define a Catullan masculinity. Even in the face of what could be an effeminising obsession with the

promiscuous and deceiving Lesbia, 'Catullus' recovers a masculinity which is based on a model of speaking like a man.

Before considering the use of *foedus* in c.109, it is worth noting the extent to which the emotional tone, register and even imagery of c.76 informs depictions of 'Petrarchan' love in sixteenth-century English poetry. This is perhaps one of the most disenchanted poems in the elegiac corpus, and the sense of 'Catullus' exhaustion, both physical and moral, is strongly articulated. The quiet despair of *difficile est longum subito deponere amorem*, 'it is difficult suddenly to lay aside a long-cherished love' (13) for example, re-emerges in Wyatt's 'the long love that in my thought doth harbour' (sonnet 10.1), a poem which ends in the word 'faithfully', derived from *fides*. The depictions of 'Catullus' love as a 'plague' (*pestem*, 20), as a 'baleful sickness' (*taetrum... morbum*, 25) seem to inform Renaissance depictions of love-sickness such as that in Robert Sidney's 'bitter' love sonnets noted in the introductory chapter. Most pressing, however, is the emotional weariness of the Catullan narrator as he acknowledges the unworthiness of Lesbia as the object of his love, yet cannot escape from her thrall: 'what a lethargy creeps into my inmost joints, and has cast out all joys from my heart!' (*mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus | expulit ex omni pectore laetities*, 20-21). While there are no direct verbal allusions, this aura of fatigue, of stasis and near-collapse is typical of Wyatt's love poetry and very prominent in the texts considered later in this chapter.

But to return to Catullus' use of *foedus*:

Nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam
vere, quantum a me Lesbia amata mea est.
nulla fides ullo fuit umquam foedere tanta,
in amore tuo ex parte reperta mea est.
87.1-4

No woman can say truly that she has been loved as much as my Lesbia was loved by me. No faithfulness in any bond was ever such as has been found on my part in my love for you.

Lesbia can say (*dicere*) that she has been loved, while ‘Catullus’ loves; Lesbia is the object of a love-bond to which only one party adheres, and the repetition of *mea est* at the ends of lines 2 and 4 put the emphasis on ‘Catullus’ emotions, and the opaqueness of Lesbia’s. If Catullan love can be articulated via the semantics of a compact or verbal bond then it also serves as a way of defining and differentiating Lesbia from ‘Catullus’. The Catullan lover has often been read as effeminised, rendered emotionally impotent by his overwhelming and unrequited love for Lesbia.³³ By utilising the idiom of Roman elite masculinity, however – *fides*, *foedus*, *pietas* – these texts redefine a form of masculinity which may certainly be compromised but which is based around verbal honour and fidelity as opposed to the vocal deceptiveness and unreliability of Lesbia’s words.³⁴ The association between the concept of *foedus* and masculinity can be seen in c.72 and c.109, the last poem in the loosely defined Lesbia ‘cycle’.

C.109 is built around a final burst of hope that Lesbia’s promise of faithful and lasting love will hold true: *di magni, facite ut vere promittere possit | atque id sincere dicat et ex animo*, ‘ye great gods, grant that she may be able to keep this promise truly, and that she may say it sincerely and from her heart’ (3-4). *Promittere*, ‘to promise’ and *dicat*, ‘she may say’ foreground the verbal nature of what is at stake here, and the final line articulates the goal to which the Catullan narrator aspires: *aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae*, ‘this eternal compact of hallowed friendship’ (6). *Amicitia* may seem, to modern eyes, a rather tame aspiration for the passionate Catullan lover, but it serves to contextualise his expectations of Lesbia in a precise manner. *Amicitia*, loosely translatable as ‘friendship’, summarises a whole series of social bonds, predominantly between

³³ See e.g. Skinner (1981), Fowler (1987), Greene (1995a), Dyson (2007). Certainly some of the texts support this reading: c.11, for example, uses the imagery of ‘Catullus’ love as a flower cut down by a passing plough. This trope is used by Sappho to represent the loss of virginity on a bride’s wedding night, but also appears in Homer associated with young warriors cut down in battle (e.g. *Il.* 8.303-5): the simile is re-worked by Virgil in the *Aeneid* for the death of Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.434-437) which repeats Catullus’ *veluti*, *flos* and *aratro*.

³⁴ The gendered nature of speech acts is institutionalised in Roman law where women’s ability to speak in legal contexts is severely limited: see Gardner (1986).

men, upon which Roman society is built.³⁵ By using this as the defining term of his love, 'Catullus' invokes a host of associations which are also tied to ideas of Roman masculinity. C.72 makes this very clear: in a poem which alludes to c.70 with which this chapter started ('you used once to say that Catullus was your only friend, Lesbia, and that you would not prefer Jupiter himself to me', 72.1-2), the contours of Catullan love are delineated.³⁶

Dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam
sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos
72.3-4

I loved you then, not only as the common sort love a mistress, but as
a father loves his sons and sons-in-law

This form of love encompasses, for 'Catullus', both erotic love for a mistress and a more generalised love that binds specifically male relationships. It is notably not just applied to a genetic relationship, the way a father loves his sons (*gnatos*), but also identifies a socially constructed relationship, that between a man and his sons-in-law (*generos*), men brought into the family through the marriage of his daughters who, significantly, are not mentioned here. That Lesbia fails to participate in this type of love is a marker of her femininity; but her gender is also a reason for her exclusion. Because her words are transient, untrustworthy and treacherous, she cannot be a party to the kind of social contract upon which masculinity is built.

'Catullus', on the other hand, consistently reiterates the steadfast and true nature of his verbal acts. Whatever the love narrative of the poetry tells us of the romantic anguish suffered by 'Catullus', the sub-text is one acutely concerned with the dynamics of gender. The construction of Lesbia as the epitome of

³⁵ OLD: *amicitia* (1) friendship; (3) relationship between states or rulers. See Cicero, *De amicitia*; on the problematisation of *amicitia*, Oliensis (1997), Williams (2012) 17-23, 174-85 on *amicitia* in Catullus.

³⁶ *Dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum | Lesbia, nec prae me velle tenere lovem*, 72.1-2: we should note, however, that the word 'friend' does not appear in the Latin which might more literally be rendered as 'you once used to say that you know only Catullus'.

female verbal corruption and duplicity serves as a touchstone against which the negotiation of Catullan masculinity takes place. The love which is foregrounded in c.72 is *aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae*, 'this eternal compact of hallowed friendship' of c.109, and we know that Lesbia will not be a party to it because she can never speak 'like a man'.

Catullus' poetry is not the only Latin text from this period which concerns itself with the gendered dynamics of speech-acts. Cicero's *Pro Caelio* is a defence speech given on 4th April 56 BCE and is of particular interest to readings of Catullus because of the parallels traditionally drawn between Cicero's Clodia Metelli and Lesbia.³⁷ The precise relationship between the historical Clodia Metelli, Cicero's depiction of her in the *Pro Caelio*, and Lesbia is problematic to pin down.³⁸ Certainly the mentions of Clodia in Cicero's letters after this trial indicate a different relationship between them than the antagonistic one of the defence speech, and show that they maintained some kind of social connection despite the court case.³⁹ A number of scholars have explicitly read Cicero's Clodia as a construction which draws on established literary traditions and tropes.⁴⁰ C.16, too, as noted above, is a helpful reminder of the highly crafted literary nature of Catullan poetry, however spontaneous, emotionally authentic and

³⁷ Scholars have, on the whole, moved away from an easy and uncomplicated identification of Clodia Metelli with Lesbia but traces still exist e.g. Wiseman (1985). On reading Catullus and Cicero together, see Fitzgerald (1995) especially chapter 5, Krostenko (2001), Stroup (2010).

³⁸ C.79 teasingly associates Lesbia with one of the three Clodia sisters when it describes Lesbius, a male relation, as *pulcher*, 'pretty' (79.1): Clodia Metelli's brother, Publius Clodius, has the cognomen *Pulcher*; the poem has Lesbia 'prefer' Lesbius to 'Catullus', and the *Pro Caelio* suggests unsubtly that the relationship between Clodia Metelli and P.Clodius Pulcher is an incestuous one e.g. 'that woman's husband - I meant to say brother; I always make that slip' (*istius mulieris viro - fratrem volui dicere; semper hic erro*, 13.32). On the other hand, Clodia's husband, Q.Metellus Celer, died in 59 BCE which does not 'match' c.83 where Lesbia is married. Apuleius' *Apology* 10 identifies Lesbia as one of the Clodias, though not necessarily Clodia Metelli - even though it is based on information that is 'at least third hand', it reappears in fifteenth and sixteenth century editions of Catullus as noted below: see e.g. Booth (1999) xxxiv. Dyson Hejduk (2008) 4-9 discusses the historical Clodia Metelli and the controversies over how to relate her to the fictional Lesbia, as does Skinner (1983) 273-87, (2003) 91-95, now (2011).

³⁹ See Cicero's letters to Atticus on his relationship to Clodia and the 'incest' story: 9.1, 12.2, 14.1, 22.5, 23.3. These are discussed in e.g. Richlin (1992) 85, Booth (1999), Dyson Hejduk (2008) which translates all the sources into English.

⁴⁰ Leen (2000) is particularly concerned with the imagery of the *domus* and the way Cicero's speech positions Clodia as violating the social and cultural conventions associated with the Roman household.

sincere it might appear to be. So how, then, can we read the undoubted correspondences between the representations of Cicero's Clodia and Catullus' Lesbia?

The date of Cicero's oration, 56 BCE, falls easily within the dateable period of Catullus' verse, 57-54 BCE, and there are intriguing mentions in the Catullan texts of a Caelius (e.g. c.58), and a Rufus (e.g. cc.69, 77) who has betrayed the narrator's friendship and appears to have stolen his girl, as well as a poem written about Cicero himself (c.49).⁴¹ Skinner suggests that Catullus drew on Cicero's portrait of Clodia Metelli to create his Lesbia but, as we shall see, the complex of references set up between the two texts seems to operate in both directions.⁴² Whichever was first, what can be said is that the oration and the poetry are testament to the way a certain archetype of elite Roman womanhood might be put into circulation and prove valuable to male constructors of different genres of discourse. Cicero is performing a defence speech designed with the intention, which was achieved, of getting M.Caelius Rufus off a charge of *vis*, 'violence', under the *lex Plautia de vi*;⁴³ Catullus is writing what might be called social poetry, concerned with the lives and values of certain 'sets' in Rome - young, urban, urbane, cultured, literary - and yet, despite their differences, both make rhetorical and ideological use of the portraits of Clodia Metelli and Lesbia which sit at their heart.

It is possible to add to this pair Sallust's well-known portrait of Sempronia in his *de coniuratione Catilinae* which was written sometime after 53 BCE though set in 63 BCE, and which seems to draw on some of the same characteristics for Sempronia as we see in Cicero's Clodia Metelli and Lesbia.⁴⁴ Pertinent here is Sallust's commentary on Sempronia's verbal fluency: *posse versus facere... iocum*

⁴¹ Dyson Hejduk (2008) 4-9 reads only Catullus' Rufus as relating to M.Caelius Rufus; see also Skinner (2011) 135-6.

⁴² Skinner (2003).

⁴³ There are five formal charges against M.Caelius Rufus, two of which are dealt with by Cicero in his defence speech: see Wiseman (1985).

⁴⁴ See Mackay (1962) on dating; on Sempronia and her function in Sallust's narrative, see Boyd (1987), Dixon (2001). Sempronia is discussed further in chapter 4 in relation to Sulpicia and Roman women's writing.

movere, sermone uti vel modesto vel molli procaci: prorsus multae facetiae multusque lepos inerat, ‘she could compose poetry... tell jokes, and use language which was modest or tender or wanton; in fine, she possessed a high degree of wit and charm’.⁴⁵ Given that Sempronia is a shameless, wanton figure who epitomises the moral corruption of those associated with Catiline’s ‘conspiracy’, her verbal dexterity is no more salubrious than is Lesbia’s or, indeed, that of Clodia Metelli.⁴⁶

When Cicero says of Caelius’ accusers: ‘the only object of slander... is to insult; if it has a strain of coarseness, it is called abuse; if one of wit, it is called elegance’ (*si facetius urbanitas nominatur* (3.6)), he uses an idiom familiar to Catullus’ verse.⁴⁷ There are other resemblances, too, between the Catullan persona and M.Caelius Rufus: Cicero describes the defendant as ‘a man who never refused a dinner... who has used unguents’ (27). This portrait of youthful male pleasures in a man-about-town has its parallels in Catullan poetry: for example, the dinner party poems like cc.12 and 13, the latter of which promises that the divine perfume (*unguentum*, 13.11) of the unnamed Lesbia will make Fabullus want to be ‘all nose’ (*totum... nasum*, 13.14).⁴⁸

If we can read resemblances between Caelius and ‘Catullus’, then the same can be done between Clodia and Lesbia: especially damning, perhaps, is Cicero’s indictment of Clodia’s flaunting sexuality. At the start of the speech he describes his client as being attacked by the ‘wealth of a courtesan’ (*opibus meretriciis*, 1.1) and, later, more maliciously, says of Clodia: ‘she revels in her degraded lusts amid the most open publicity and in the broadest daylight’ (*sed in turpissimis rebus frequentissima celebritate et clarissima luce laetetur*, 20.47). This recalls the lurid depictions of Lesbia taking her seat in the *salax taberna*, ‘whore-house

⁴⁵ *Cat.* 25: all Latin quotations are from Reynolds (1991).

⁴⁶ Catiline is also in the background to the *Pro Caelio*: see 4.10-12.

⁴⁷ e.g. cc.12.9, 50.8 for *facetis*; while the term *urbanitas* does not appear in Catullan texts, the idea of a sophisticated, polished city life-style permeates the world which he depicts. On the Roman culture of insults, see Corbeill (1996). All Latin quotations from the *Pro Caelio* are from Clark (1905), translations from Gardner (1958).

⁴⁸ See also *Cael.* 15.35 on the lifestyle enjoyed by Caelius and Clodia (‘debauchery, amours, misconduct, trips to Baiae, beach-parties, feasts, revels, concerts, musical parties, pleasure-boats’) which is similar to that depicted in Catullan verse; see d’Arms (1970).

tavern' (37.1); in c.11 taking on three hundred lovers at once; and in c.58 on the street-corners and alleyways of Rome where she 'serves the filthy lusts' of passing men.⁴⁹

So what can be made of these salacious, even obscene, portraits of Clodia and Lesbia? Firstly, it is worth noting that invective itself, 'an accepted mode of discourse' in Republican Rome, is a marker of masculinity.⁵⁰ Having already noted the way in which Lesbia's slippery speech is mapped onto her sexual promiscuity, it is possible to trace a similar synthesis of concepts being activated in Cicero's oration. The *Pro Caelio* turns on issues of who is lying, who telling the truth, whose words we can - and should - believe. It is a speech about verbal deception, and the integrity of words, and it is this aspect which ties it to the dynamics of speech in Catullus. Very early in the oration Cicero makes it clear that he is positioning this case as one which is about what Caelius' detractors have said of him (*dixerunt*, 2.3) and, later, argues that his accusers have made 'not criminal charges but abuse and slander' (*non criminibus, sed vocibus maledictisque*, 3.6). *Maledictis*, from *maledicere*, 'to speak ill of, literally to say bad things', reminds us of c.83.1 where Lesbia abuses 'Catullus' (*mala plurima*

⁴⁹ *quos simul complexa tenet trecentos, | nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium ilia rumpens*, 'three hundred of whom she holds at once in her embrace, not loving one of them really, but again and again draining the strength of all', (11.18-20): *ilia rumpens* might more specifically be translated as breaking or destroying the groin or guts of her lovers, a deeply sexualised and grotesque image which conveys Lesbia's ability to crush the masculinity of her lovers; c.58.4-5: *nunc in quadriuiis et angiportis | glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes*, where *glubit* has been read obscenely and explicitly as 'masturbates': see Lateiner (1977); Adams (1982) 74 more discreetly describes it as the act of 'retracting the foreskin'.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Gildenhard (2007): 'the extent to which members of Rome's ruling elite could shower each other with abuse in the senate or lawcourts is striking' (174); the senate and law-courts are sites of almost exclusively male speech. On invective in Republican Rome, see Corbeill (1996) and the collections edited by Booth (2007), and Smith & Covina (2011). The example of the *Perusinae glandes*, 'sling bullets', exchanged during Octavian's siege of Perugia in 41-40 BCE speaks to a similar connection between invective and gender: the lead bullets were inscribed with insulting obscenities aimed at the two opposing leaders - Octavian (Augustus) and Fulvia, wife to Mark Antony. Octavian's masculinity was the subject of taunts from Fulvia's side as he was addressed as Octavia, the feminine form of his name. The invective against Fulvia was more obscene, focusing on crude sexual insults centred on her genitalia: the message was that her 'deformed' female body reflected, affirmed and encoded her adoption of masculine political and military postures. We do not know to what extent, or even if, Fulvia herself played a role in composing these insults to Octavian, but this episode serves to reinforce a cultural connection between invective and masculinity: see Hallett (1977), also Kellum (1997) 173.

dicat) in front of her husband.⁵¹ One of Caelius' accusers is, significantly, Clodia Metelli, so parallel accusations are made against Clodia and Lesbia through the disparaging, even defamatory, things they are made to say about Caelius and 'Catullus', the male targets of their maligning female speech.

Cicero's defence strategy in this speech is clever: he does not deny Caelius' affair with Clodia, but writes it off as the expected, even normalised, behaviour of an elite youth who should be allowed some indulgence before he takes on the serious mantle of Roman manhood.⁵² This accepted period of youthful extravagance is legitimated both by social custom and an appeal to nature: 'for by common consent a young man is allowed some dalliance, and nature herself is prodigal of youthful passions' (*datur enim concessu omnium huic aliqui ludus aetati, et ipsa natura profundit adolescentiae cupiditates*, 12.28). In a speech made in the public court by a man, about a man and to other men, both of the jury and as spectators, there is accord here: Clodia's sexuality may be aberrant, deviant and reprehensible, but Caelius' can be seen as a legitimate expression of Roman manhood.

By a slippage in the semantic field being traced here, sexual behaviour and verbal integrity are implicated in and against each other: Clodia's sexual promiscuity becomes equated with a looseness in her speech, a wanton disregard for both verbal and sexual probity. Caelius, on the other hand, despite his own licentious behaviour, can be recuperated to a normalised standard of masculinity: not only is his sexual affair with Clodia rendered conventional and regular, its adherence to the customary expressions of young Roman manhood serves to guarantee the truth of what he says. Caelius is acquitted in this case

⁵¹ See also *male dicendi* (3.7), *maledictis* (7.15), and 13.31 where Cicero asserts *omnia sunt alia non crimina, sed maledicta*, 'all the other matters complained of are not accusations, but slanders': this comes just after he has repeated Clodia's name twice in the sentence before, making an implicit connection between her and the calumny against Caelio.

⁵² e.g. *Cael.* 18.42, 31.76. The figure of the *adulescens* is discussed by e.g. Geffcken (1973) who unpacks the way Cicero uses the stereotypical comedy figures of the elite youth and the courtesan to shape his Caelio and Clodia: it should be noted that *adulescens* refers to a 'young' man who may be as old as in his thirties and is a Roman construction of male youth which indicates a period before full masculinity is attained through the performance of political duties; also Leigh (2004), Harries (2007).

because Clodia's accusations against him are positioned as *falsa* (15.35), the forged allegations of a reckless, unruly and angry woman (*temeraria, procax, irata mulier finxisse crimen*, 22.55) against a man who has given 'conscientious evidence' (*vir religiose testimonium dixisse videatur*, 22.55). In this final indictment, the potent alignment of gender - *mulier, vir* - with verbal integrity (her *finxisse crimen*, 'forged, invented, counterfeit accusation or slander'; his *religiose testimonium*, 'reverent, scrupulous even pious testimony') is made transparent.

Cicero's debt to literary models - primarily 'new' comedy, but also a mocking response to tragedy - has been much discussed, but the relationship between the *Pro Caelio* and Catullus' poems has tended to be read differently.⁵³ Either both Cicero and Catullus have been seen to be responding to the authentic historical figure of Clodia Metelli or, more recently, Catullus has been read as drawing on Cicero's representation of Clodia.⁵⁴ This chapter suggests that it is also possible to read Cicero as drawing on Catullus' Lesbia in creating his own fictive Clodia Metelli; and that both texts exploit the already existing stereotypes of 'bad' women which revolve around sex, betrayal and lies.

Moving beyond a generalised misogynistic portrait, however, Cicero's Clodia and Catullus' Lesbia are put to very specific use in the service of negotiating an oppositional position of Roman masculinity.⁵⁵ By foregrounding the treachery, deceit and duplicity of female words - their *perfidia* - these texts use Clodia and Lesbia to highlight the concomitant truthfulness and integrity of

⁵³ On 'new' comedy as a structuring device in the *Pro Caelio*, see Geffcken (1973), Leigh (2004), Harries (2007); also Gildenhard (2007) on Cicero's use of tragic tropes in his speeches, including the *Pro Caelio*, and Tatum (2011) on dramatic motifs in the same.

⁵⁴ See especially Skinner (2003) for the latter position: she reads Lesbia as a 'recognisable fictive analogue for the public figure of Clodia' (94) and as a symbol for illicit political relations in the troubled last years of the republic.

⁵⁵ Wray (2001) 206-09 suggests that there might be two somewhat competing models of manhood at the time at which Catullus was writing: the traditional Roman *mos maiorum*, and a cosmopolitan, Hellenistic, high-culture model. Wray's example of Julius Caesar depicting himself as composing poetry while a captive on a pirate ship shows how the two modes of manhood might be combined, melding a traditional Roman heroism with a more Hellenistic cultural refinement. McDonnell (2006) expands on Wray's position and explores Roman manliness as an ethical quality: the discourse traced in this chapter adds to both these arguments.

male speech as put into the mouths of Caelius and 'Catullus'.⁵⁶ *Fides*, already a marker of elite Roman masculinity, is upheld in these texts and, in the case of the Catullan poems, serves to recuperate a sense of masculinity for the narrator despite his compromising sexual obsession with the faithless Lesbia. By dramatising moral integrity as something which can reside in the act of speaking, both the *Pro Caelio* and Catullus' Lesbia poems delineate powerfully what it means, in Republican Rome, to speak like a man.

1.2 *Brittannus Catullus*: locating Catullus in the Henrician court

Catullus was rediscovered in the fourteenth century in Verona. The *editio princeps* was a large quarto printed by the Aldine press in Venice in 1472 which published the Catullan poems alongside those of Propertius and Tibullus.⁵⁷ Opposite the first page was a biography of Catullus which situated his birth a year before that of Sallust and which then continues as follows:

Amavit hic puellam primariam Clodiam, quam Lesbiam suo appellat in carmine [...] Superiorem habuit neminem. In iocis apprime lepidus, in serio vero gravissimus extitit. Erotica scripsit.

He loved Clodia, a girl of the first rank, whom he called Lesbia in his poems... No-one was his superior. In wit he was delightful, to the highest degree, and in serious matters, most truly grave. He wrote erotic verse.⁵⁸

This paratext frames the Catullan poems for his Renaissance readers in certain ways: it foregrounds the Lesbia poems as central to the work of Catullus, and categorises them as *erotica*. It also identifies Lesbia as Clodia, who would have been known from Cicero. It gives a cultural judgement on Catullus' work: that he had no poetic superiors; and, finally, it gives a sense of the tone of his texts - that

⁵⁶ *Perfidia* is not used explicitly of Lesbia, but is by Propertius of Cynthia: *saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam, | hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia*, 'I dreaded oft much hardship from your fickleness, Cynthia, but never such treachery as this', 1.15.1-2.

⁵⁷ Gaisser (1993), Wray (2001).

⁵⁸ Quoted in Wray (2001) 3, the translation is slightly adapted here; this life was written by Gerolamo Squarzafigo and is drawn from Jerome, Apuleius *Apology* 10, and possibly other now lost sources.

they are full of wit and charm (*lepidus*, itself a Catullan term), but that they also speak of more sombre and sober concerns. This latter aspect is important because Catullus' Renaissance receptions have previously been read by modern scholars via the mediations of Martial.⁵⁹ The racy, amusing, untroubled Catullus of Martial certainly has a presence in the Renaissance, but in this chapter it is the passionate, anguished, urban love poet who will be traced through the poetry of Thomas Wyatt.

The generally accepted position on Catullan reception in England admits that Catullus was probably known from the late fifteenth century but cites Nicholas Udall's 1533 *Floures for Latine Spekyng* as the first direct allusions to his work; and Philip Sidney's translation of c.70, and Walter Raleigh's adaptation of c.5.4-6 as the first English imitations.⁶⁰ While scholars have noted John Skelton's *The Boke of Phyllyp Sparrow*, the consensus is that since there are no obscene overtones in the poem, it is a response not directly to Catullus, but to European imitations of his sparrow poems.⁶¹ Despite Skelton claiming the title of the 'British Catullus', *Brittanium... Catullum*, scholars to date have dismissed this as vague and imprecise self-aggrandisement rather than as an acknowledgement from Skelton of a specific imitative model for his verse.⁶² Certainly there is an

⁵⁹ See especially Gaisser (1993): this work is summarised in Gaisser (2009) e.g. 170 on Martial's 'obscene' reading of cc.2 and 3 in epigram 11.6.14-16; 176-183 on Pontano's Catullan imitations; 186-190 on the influence of Catullus on the Pléiade poets of Paris. On Martial as a mediator for the Renaissance Catullus, see Swann (1994).

⁶⁰ On Catullan reception in England, see Duckett (1925), McPeck (1939), Gaisser (1993), (2001), (2009), Blevins (2004). Udall, headmaster of Eton 1534-40 and Westminster 1554-56, comments on four verses from c.84; as well as translating c.70, Sidney is also noted for his adaption of c.51 in the Second Eclogue of the 'old' *Arcadia*: 'My eyes be dim, my limbs shake | my voice is hoarse, my throat scorched | my tongue to this my roof cleaves | my fancy amazed, my thoughts dulled | my heart doth ache, my life faints', (10-15). It is worth noting that as this eclogue is sung by Pyrocles in his disguise as an Amazon, it seems to be aware of, and dramatically exploit, the gender duality of Catullus' direct imitation of Sappho's text. Sidney names the metre of Pyrocles' next song 'phaleuciaks', a term he invented for hendecasyllables, a metre used extensively by Catullus: see n.144 in Duncan-Jones' edition of the *Arcadia*. Sappho's fragment 31 had long been known from Longinus, and her poetry was available in Greek from 1554: see van Eck, Bussels, Delbeke & Pieters (2012).

⁶¹ McPeck (1939) 44-45, Gaisser (2001) xxix. Blevins (2004) 19-22. Cheney (2011) 95-98 reads *Phyllyp Sparrow* as 'in the Roman elegiac tradition of Ovid' though he does position *Am.*2.6 as an imitation of *Cat.*3: the quote is from 96.

⁶² *Ite, Brittannorum lux o radiosa, Brittanium | carmina nostra pium vestrum celebrate Catullum!*, 'Go, o shining light of the Britons, and celebrate our songs, your worthy (*pium*) British Catullus!',

accumulation of sparrow and kiss poems from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, with the sparrow sometimes being turned into Martial's dove, but textual evidence discussed here suggests that it is possible to tie Skelton's *Phyllyp Sparrow* more closely to Catullus with specific and precise allusions. Skelton's *Garlande of Laurell* which incorporates *Phyllyp Sparrow* was not printed until 1523, but the poems of which it consists seem to have been composed between the 1480s and c.1498 and circulated amongst readers at, and attached to, the English court such as the Howard family.⁶³

In addition to reading Skelton's texts as directly drawing on Catullus, this section also considers the poems of John Leland, an epigrammatist who writes to Catullus (e.g. his *Ad Catullum*) and also places himself into an explicitly Catullan tradition. Both poets were closely associated with the Henrician court: Skelton was tutor to the young Prince Henry between c.1496-1502, and wrote an advice book for him, the *Speculum Principis*, in Latin, in 1501.⁶⁴ One of Leland's patrons was Thomas Cromwell and he was himself appointed chaplain to Henry VIII in c.1529. Leland contributed to Udall's *Floures*, and the two men also wrote verses for Anne Boleyn's coronation in 1533, possibly commissioned by Thomas Howard and Cardinal Wolsey.⁶⁵

So it is possible to place both authors, Skelton and Leland, within the 'first generation of English humanists', and to get a sense of where their poems circulated and by whom they were read.⁶⁶ Leland spent some years in Paris during the 1520s, studying and writing Latin verse. From his reputation amongst French classicists such as Guillaume Budé, and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, the royal librarian to Francis I, his poems certainly were in circulation with a

The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, 1521-22: the Garland was assembled between c.1480-1498 incorporating earlier verse, and was completed and published in 1523: Carlson (1991) 102-5. This quotation comes from Skelton's address to his book (*Skeltonis alloquitur librum suum*) which is itself an imitation of Catullan addresses to his poems e.g. c.42, *adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis*, 'come hither, hendecasyllables, all of you there are' (42.1). All quotations from Skelton are from the Scattergood edition (1983).

⁶³ Carlson (1991) 102-6.

⁶⁴ Scattergood (1983) 16; Carlson (1991), Walker (2000), Starkey (2009) 120-129; Cheney (2011) 122-125 on Skelton's poetic career.

⁶⁵ Carley (1986), Carley & Petitmengin (2004) 197, Ives (2004) 136, Blevins (2004) 22-23.

⁶⁶ Carley (1986) 20.

scholarly, courtly French audience.⁶⁷ One of his poems was addressed to Jean Salmon Macrin, whose own *Carminum Libellus* of 1528 draws on Catullus, and both Macrin and Leland wrote in sapphic metre, as does Catullus in, for example, c.51.⁶⁸ Leland's associations with the English humanist circles of Erasmus and Thomas More, and his later role in establishing a royal library for Henry VIII suggest that his poetry was also known and read in these English courtly and intellectual settings.⁶⁹ Leland's epigrams circulated only in manuscript and were not printed until 1589, almost forty years after his death, but his *Naenia*, elegies on the death of Thomas Wyatt, were published in 1542. According to one of these poems, Leland was a student with Wyatt at Cambridge (*me tibi coniunxit comitem gratissima Granta*, 'the dearest Granta joined me to you as your companion').⁷⁰

Before looking more closely at the evidence for reading Skelton and Leland as testament to a direct knowledge of Catullus at the Henrician court, it is worth considering some lines from one of Henry VIII's songs which may support this proposition though, admittedly, the parallels are not particularly close: 'for idleness | is chief mistress | of vices all' may be drawing on Catullus' *otium*, *Catulle, tibi molestum est: | otio exultas nimiumque gestis*, 'idleness, Catullus, does you harm, you riot in your idleness and wanton too much' (c.51.13-14).⁷¹ C.51, the re-writing of Sappho 31, stands behind Wyatt's sonnet about the 'unkind tongue' (16.3), his 'What Means This', as well as Sidney's Second Eclogue noted above.⁷² Peter Herman, questioning the literary history which has Wyatt as

⁶⁷ Carley (1986).

⁶⁸ Carley (1986) 12-17.

⁶⁹ Carley (1986): on Erasmus and Thomas More, 9-10, on Leland at the court of Francis I, 12-16, on Henry VIII's royal library being constructed from the dissolution of monastic libraries, 21.

⁷⁰ *Naeniae in mortem Thomae Viati equitis incomparabilis*, 38: all quotations from Leland are from Sutton's online edition at www.philological.bham.ac.uk/lelandpoems which is based on the 1589 published edition edited by Thomas Newton, and a manuscript executed by John Stow now in the Bodleian Library (ms. 464 (4)).

⁷¹ 'Pastime with Good Company' in the *Henry VIII* manuscript, transcribed in Stevens (1979).

⁷² 'But if I sit near her by | with loud voice my heart doth cry | and yet my mouth is dumb and dry | what means this?' (Wyatt, 103.21-24), and 'my tongue doth fail what I should crave' (103.26), cf. Cat.51 especially 6-9: *nam simul te | Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi | lingua sed torpet*, 'for whenever I see you, Lesbia, at once no sound of voice remains within my mouth, but my tongue

one of the earliest importers of 'Petrarchism' to English verse, suggests that Henry VIII's early poetry from c.1508-1515 is already using Petrarchan tropes before Wyatt.⁷³ The argument here is that what has been identified as 'Petrarchan' draws directly and explicitly on Catullus and his elegiac successors, and that it is possibly Catullus who is being imitated by Wyatt and Henry VIII here as much as mediated versions of the Catullan in Petrarch.

Skelton's *Phyllyp Sparrow* was composed in c.1505 and is a curious, long, rambling, sometimes satiric poem written in the voice of Jane Scrope for her dead bird. Although McPeck and Gaisser have dismissed the possibility of this poem as a direct response to Catullus' sparrow poems, cc.2 and 3, there are counter arguments to be made. Gaisser denies that there are erotic or obscene overtones to be read in Skelton's verse as there are in Catullus where *passer*, 'sparrow', has been read as a slang term for 'penis'.⁷⁴ A consideration, however, of these lines describing the sparrow and its interactions with its mourning mistress, might belie that position:

It had a velvet cap,
And wold syt upon my lap
And seke after small wormes
And somtymes white bred crommes;
And many tymes and ofte
Between my brestes soft
It wold lye and rest
[...]
It was proper and prest
[...]
Than he wold lepe and skyp
And take me by the lyp
(120-127, 139-40)

falters'. McPeck (1939) 106 suggests that Wyatt is imitating an unknown French or Italian imitation of Catullus 51 but gives no reason for this opinion.

⁷³ Herman (2010) 1-2, 50-51.

⁷⁴ This reading is certainly active in the Renaissance: see the introductory chapter on Poliziano's 1489 'obscene' reading which is reprinted in Gaisser (2007). For debates for and against *passer* as 'penis', see Jocelyn (1980), Nadeau (1980, 1984), Hooper (1985), Jones (1988), Pomeroy (2003).

The 'velvet cap', 'lap', 'brestes', 'lyp' certainly impart a distinctly eroticised air to this text, replaying the scenes with Lesbia's sparrow whom she holds in her lap or breast (*quem in sinu tenere*, where 'sinu' can mean both, 2.2; also *nec sese a gremio illius movebat*, 'nor would he stir from her lap', c.3.8).⁷⁵ 'Prest', meaning quick, is perhaps also a witty nod to the phallic reading of Catullus where c.3 is positioned as a post-coital poem of temporary sexual incapacity, especially when combined with 'lye and rest' ... 'between my brestes soft'.

Even more persuasive is the concern for the sparrow's journey after death. C.3 makes reference to the dark road, presided over by Orcus, which the dead sparrow must travel, from which no-one returns (*qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum | illuc, unde negant redire quemquam*, 3.11-12) - unless the *passer* has the recuperative powers of the male sexual organ.⁷⁶ Skelton's poem expands this figure as the narrator prays that the sparrow's soul will be kept from 'the mares [marsh] depe | of Acherontes well' (67-69) and depicts a distinctively classical underworld inhabited by Pluto (72), 'foule Alecto' (74), Proserpina (83), and Cerberus (85) 'whom Thesues dyd afraye | whom Hercules dyd outrage' (86-87). Skelton takes Catullus' lines and expands them to display his classical learning.

So Skelton's poem about the dead sparrow draws on Catullus in two ways: in giving a mischievously eroticised edge to the trope of the dead pet bird, and in incorporating a vision of the bird's journey after death. The Catullan influence is strong, especially when placed with Skelton's self-identification as the 'British Catullus'. Also suggestive is, in the same poem, Skelton's reference to a Sulpicia, a famous and eloquent Roman female poet:⁷⁷

Dame Sulpicia at Rome
Whose name registered was
Forever in tables of bras
Because that she dyd pas

⁷⁵ OLD: *sinus* 1b, 2b, 10b..

⁷⁶ This reading also implies a hellish metaphor for Lesbia's body which has the power to 'kill' masculinity: see c.11 on a similar image.

⁷⁷ See chapter 4 on the reception of Sulpicia in the early modern period.

In poesy to endyte
And eloquently to wryte
148-153

This certainly may be a reference to the Sulpicia written about in Martial: ‘let all girls who wish to please one man read Sulpicia; let all husbands who wish to please one bride read Sulpicia’ (10.35.1-4).⁷⁸ But remembering that Catullus was first published with Propertius and Tibullus, in whose corpus Sulpicia’s elegies were transmitted, there is a strong possibility that Skelton is here making allusion to Sulpicia the elegist, whose poetry is discussed in chapter 4. If Martial’s Sulpicia was an authentic female poet, her works have not survived; at least six poems of Sulpicia the elegist have, and were printed in the same volume as Catullus to whom Skelton explicitly compares himself.

Further evidence for a clear Catullan presence in the poetry of the early Henrician court can be supported through Leland’s epigrams, many of which are written in elegiac couplets or are hendecasyllabic, metres which are associated with Catullus (as well as, for example, Ovid). Scholars have not been able to date them accurately but Leland was clearly recognised as a poet by the time he contributed to Udall’s *Floures* and Anne Boleyn’s coronation, both in 1533, and so it can be assumed with some confidence that some of his epigrams, of which there were 282 printed in the 1589 edition, were written before that date, a period also tentatively ascribed to the Wyatt love poems considered in the next section.⁷⁹ Henry VIII’s love letters to Anne Boleyn which will be read in conjunction with Wyatt, were also written in the late 1520s.⁸⁰

Epigram 17, *Natale Solum*, ‘My Native Soil’, gives us an idea of how Leland placed himself poetically:

⁷⁸ *Omnes Sulpiciam legant puellae | uni quae cupiunt viro placere; | omnes Sulpiciam legant mariti | uni qui cupiunt placere nuptae*: all quotations from Martial are from the Lindsay edition. Sulpicia, the wife of Calenus, is also praised in Martial 10.38.

⁷⁹ *Principum ac illustrium aliquot et eruditorum in Anglia virorum, encomia, trophaea, genethliaca et epithalamia. A Ioanne Lelando antiquario conscripta, nunc primarum in lucem edita*, 1589, London.

⁸⁰ See the next section for the problems of ascribing accurate dates to the letters.

*Mantua Virgilium genuit, Verona Catullum.
Patria Londinium est urbs generosa mihi*

Mantua gave birth to Virgil, and Verona to Catullus. The noble city of London is my home

Written in an elegiac couplet, Leland's poetic tradition, albeit one which is sharply abbreviated, leads from Virgil, via Catullus, to Leland himself. It is difficult to tell whether the order of Virgil then Catullus is important here or not: certainly it inverts the chronological order so perhaps it is a marker of poetic hierarchy. It is notable that it is Catullus who is used here not, for example, Ovid. Place is also central: London becomes the cultural birthplace of poetic genius (however wishful, in the case of Leland, this might be), and specifically London as *urbs*, the modern city. We have already seen how Catullus' poetry is grounded in Rome amongst elite, cultured 'sets' in the city: the poetic equivalent for the sixteenth century will be the court centred in London.

Leland's elegy 237 is titled *Castos esse decet poetas*, 'poets should be chaste', a direct allusion to Catullus' c.16, *castum esse decet pium poetam*, and serves as a testament to knowledge of the elegiac 'tradition'. Again the chronology is skewed, starting with Catullus, moving back to Gallus, then proceeding to Ovid and Propertius:

Lesbia lascivo placuit formosa Catullo
[...]
Delitiae Galli docti clarique poetae
[...]
Lactea Peligni floret Nasonis amica,
Materiem numeris sueta Corynna dare:
Cynthia laudatur deteresi nympa Properti
237.1-11

Beautiful Lesbia pleased wanton Catullus
[...]
[Lycoris was] the delight of Gallus, the learned and famous poet
[...]
The milk-white mistress of Ovid of Pelignum flourished,

Corynna was accustomed to give matter for his verses:
Cynthia is praised nymph of the neat Propertius

There are a number of noteworthy points here apart from the delineation of love elegy as a genre. Lesbia is given prime position as the archetypical elegiac mistress, and Catullus is *lascivo*, 'wanton', an epithet which goes back to the Italian humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as Roman elegy itself. The foregrounding of Catullus as an erotic poet and his relationship to the beautiful (*formosa*) Lesbia is central. Striking, too, is the positioning of Corinna as *materiem*, 'material, subject matter, also physical substance' for and of Ovid's verse.⁸¹ This concept of the elegiac woman as a figure for the elegiac text itself is a prominent one in modern readings of Propertius and Ovid, so this very early and sophisticated recognition of the mistress as *scripta puella*, 'a written woman', is remarkable.⁸² *Detersi*, translated here as 'neat' in relation to Propertius is slightly opaque, but taken from *detergere*, 'to wipe away, clean away', it seems to be a comment on the quality of the Propertian, and other elegiac, texts only recently having been 'cleaned up' in philological terms, and still subject to scholarly emendations and commentaries to make them comprehensible to a Renaissance readership.⁸³ Written early in the Tudor period, this epigram gives us firm evidence for the presence of certainly Catullus, but also love elegy as a genre, at the Henrician court.

These are not the only references that Leland's epigrams make to Catullus: in epigram 30, *Ad Catullum*, Leland addresses the dead poet directly:

*Sunt qui admirantur, sunt qui venerantur, et usque
Carmina suspiciunt, docte Catulle, tua*

⁸¹ OLD: *materies* (4) material, matter; the substance of which a physical object is composed; (7) subject matter of a book.

⁸² See, especially, Wyke (2002), but also Greene (1995b, 1998) on the elegiac mistress as a 'written woman'; this idea is discussed in chapter 2 on Sidney's imitations of Propertian metapoetics.

⁸³ OLD: *detergere* (1) notes it can be used figuratively which seems to be partially the case here.

There are those who admire, there are those who revere and look up to your poems, learned Catullus⁸⁴

This is notable for its ambiguity about the status of Catullus' poems: *suspiciunt*, from *suspicio* means to admire, to esteem, but also to be suspicious of, a revealing choice of terms that gives us a sense of Catullus' edginess as a poet to be imitated.⁸⁵ Leland's own stance is clear: in *Ad Famam*, epigram 32, he calls on Fame to imbue his own verses with the colour of those of Catullus:

*Quem si nunc dederis, novae studebunt
Formae, ac purpureum induent colorem
Ut sint persimiles Catullianis*

7-9

If you [Fame] grant this now, they [his Muses] will strive for new beauty and take on a bright hue, so that they might come to closely resemble those of Catullus

In *Communis Dolor*, one of a series of elegies written by Leland on the death of Wyatt in 1542, this ambivalence towards Catullus emerges once again:

*Tristi carmine passerem Catullus
Extinctum queritur parum pudicus,
Deflet Stella suae vices columbae
Vates molliculus, tener, cinaedus.
At nos qui colimus severiora,
Et Musas sequimur sacratiores
Lumen iudicii boni Viatum
Abreptum querimus dolore iusto*

Wanton Catullus used a sad poem to complain of this dead sparrow. Stella, that soft degenerate little bugger of a poet, mourns the misfortune of his dove. But we, who attend to more serious things and are in the service of more pious Muses, are employing a just sorrow to complain that Wyatt, that light of good judgement, has been taken from us.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ This translation is lightly adapted from Sutton's.

⁸⁵ OLD: *suspicio* (2) admire, esteem; (3) mistrust, regard with suspicion.

⁸⁶ The reference to Stella is to Martial 1.7: *Stellae delictum mei columba | Verona licet audiente dicam | vicit, Maxime, passerem Catulli. | Tanto Stella meus tuo Catullo | quanto passere maior est columba*, 'The dove, the delight of my friend Stella - even with Verona listening I will say it -

This is a somewhat surprising response to Catullus, as it might have been expected that Leland would draw on Catullus' poems on the death of his brother for this funeral elegy (c.101, for example, with its haunting ending of *atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*, 'and forever, o my brother, hail and farewell!'). Instead, Leland returns to the sparrow poems, and this time contrasts himself to Catullus rather than taking him as a direct model for imitation. The frivolity of Catullus' mourning for a pet bird (however that 'bird' may be read) is contrasted with Leland's own more sombre grief, and Leland sets a distance between himself and the Latin poet. Catullus is *parum pudicus*, 'barely chaste or virtuous', itself a Catullan phrase, while Leland follows *sacratiores*, 'more hallowed or sacred' muses. At the same time, this poem ties together Catullus and Wyatt: it questions the moral status of Catullus, in this poem at least, but also makes an explicit link between his works and Wyatt.

So what can be said about these early references to, and appropriations of, Catullus? Firstly, and most importantly, they serve as witness to a Catullan presence in English poetic culture earlier than has been traditionally ascribed. These poems may not be direct translations of Catullus into English but they certainly engage explicitly with Catullan texts and the narratorial persona of the verses, and make little sense if Catullus is unknown to their readers. Secondly, they tie a knowledge of Catullus specifically to the Henrician court, and even suggest, given Skelton's role as Henry VIII's boyhood tutor, that the future king encountered Catullus in his youth.⁸⁷

Strikingly, however, Skelton's Catullus is not necessarily the same as Leland's - or, as the next section discusses, Wyatt's. Skelton's verse makes use of the wanton, frivolous Catullus whose sparrow poems appears playful and tender

has surpassed, Maximus, the sparrow of Catullus. By so much is my Stella greater than your Catullus, as a dove is greater than a sparrow': this witty exposé of competitive manhood is testament to Martial's reading of Catullus' sparrow as more than just a pet bird; see also Martial 11.6.14-16 and discussion in Gaisser (2009) 170. Adams (1982) rather oddly accepts dove as sexual slang, but not sparrow.

⁸⁷ Starkey (2009) 120-129 certainly has the young Prince Arthur reading Ovid under Skelton's tutorship and assumes that Henry's education would have followed on similar lines.

on the surface but which may hide a more slyly obscene edge. Leland's Catullus is more ambivalent: he is primarily an epigrammatist, rather than a love poet, and one whom Leland appears to esteem and yet also find unsettling. These Tudor receptions of Catullus are thus shown to be multiple and contingent, drawing on different aspects of the classical poet. The next section considers Wyatt's Catullus and argues that for Wyatt he is a love poet, one concerned acutely with the trope of an unworthy love. Of special interest will be the way in which Wyatt's texts renew the Catullan theme of gendered speech acts, and the resonance this is given within the politics of Henrician courtly erotics.

1.3 'Graven with diamonds' : Wyatt's 'Lesbia' in 'They Flee from Me' and 'Whoso List to Hunt'

On the evening of Shrovetide 1522, a court pageant was performed in York Place in Westminster in honour of a visit by ambassadors from Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, to Henry VIII.⁸⁸ The revel took the form of an elaborate allegorical masque built around the theme of love, and is usually referred to as the assault on the *château vert*.⁸⁹ Eight ladies, representing the virtues of the perfect courtly mistress, were sequestered in a tower of a castle, and were protected by another eight ladies, the vices of love, who held position at the bottom of the tower. The castle was then assailed by a company of courtly gentlemen, led by Henry himself, whose names encapsulated the qualities of the ideal courtly lover: Amorousness, Nobleness, Youth, Attendance, Loyalty, Pleasure, Gentleness, Liberty. The male company of knights attacked the castle with dates and oranges and the ladies, though they defended themselves valiantly with rose-water and 'comfittes', were, of course, overcome. The vices of love were defeated and fled, the knights entered the tower to claim their ladies

⁸⁸ The date has been adjusted to a year beginning on January 1st: in Tudor England it was 1521 and some of the commentators on this event cite it in that way e.g. Ives (2004) 37.

⁸⁹ Edward Hall's *Chronicle* gives a near-contemporary record of this masque, and is a prime source used by later scholars; educated at Cambridge, Hall was a contemporary of Henry VIII, whose reign he supported: see Hall, ed. H. Ellis (1809) 631, Howard (1994), Ives (2004) 27-28, Herman (2010) 16-27.

‘as prisoners by the handes’, and the company danced together ‘verie pleasauntly’ before adjourning for a banquet.⁹⁰

The revel is significant to this chapter for the way in which it delineates the qualities of male and female love as constructed at the Henrician court, and, especially, in how it differentiates the idealised characteristics of the courtly mistress from the contrary female ‘vices’ which deter, undermine and prevent the accomplishment of love.⁹¹ The ‘virtues’ of love were emblazoned on the costumes of the ladies who personified them, and were pronounced to be Beauty, Honour, Perseverance, Kindness, Constancy, Bounty, Mercy, Pity. ‘Beauty’ was played by Mary Tudor, Henry’s sister; ‘Kindness’ by Mary Boleyn, who had been, and possibly still was, Henry’s mistress; and ‘Perseverance’ by the young Anne Boleyn, recently arrived at court and already, it seems, making her presence felt.⁹² The female ‘vices’, played by male choristers and costumed ‘like to women of Inde’, that is, explicitly ‘foreign’ as well as compromised in their gender, were named as Danger, Disdain, Jealousy, Unkindness, Scorn, Strangeness (off-handedness) and - significantly for the discourse of speech and gender being traced here - Malebouche.

Malebouche, literally ‘bad mouth’, is translated by Ives as ‘Sharp Tongue’ but it seems to be a richer and more resonant term than that.⁹³ The pageant of *château vert* draws on the idea of an assault of love which is a staple of medieval love allegories epitomised by the *Roman de la Rose*.⁹⁴ In that poem, Malebouche

⁹⁰ Hall (1809) 631.

⁹¹ For complementary readings of the *château vert* see Howard (1994) who concentrates on the way in which it consolidates gender hierarchies; and Herman (2010) 16-27 who sees it as a staging of monarchy and political potency.

⁹² Hall (1809) 631. The *château vert* is the first documented appearance of Anne Boleyn at a court performance. There is debate about Anne’s date of birth: see Ives (2004) 14-15; he advocates 1501. Having been educated at first the Hapsburg court of Burgundy, and then the French court in the service of Queen Claude, Anne had only very recently returned to England: Ives (2004) 18-29.

⁹³ Ives (2004) 38.

⁹⁴ Herman (2010) 26 on the *château vert* ‘recalling’ the siege of love in the *Roman de la Rose* 3779-3942. The *Roman de la Rose* as we have it is the product of two authors with possibly different literary agendas: the first 4000 lines were written by Guillaume de Lorris between 1225-1230, and the continuation by Jean de Meun between 1267-1278. Written in the form of a dream vision, the poem tells the story of a young man who is shot by Cupid’s arrows and thus becomes a prisoner of love: it follows his trials until he is eventually able to ‘pluck’ the Rose whom he

is associated with lying, as well as with gossip and rumour (e.g. 3017-9, 3493-51).⁹⁵ Chaucer, in his *The Romaunt of the Rose*, translates Malebouche as 'Wikkid-Tunge': 'Wikkid-Tunge, that false espie, | which is so glad to feyne and lye'.⁹⁶ The figure of Malebouche is not always transparently female so it is striking that in the Henrician masque, her gender is foregrounded by the way she is aligned with the female 'vices' or obstructers of love, even while it is also compromised by being played by a male chorister.⁹⁷ The association being made between contrary female sexuality and a broadly-defined form of verbal deception or dishonesty is a robust one.

The *château vert* entertainment thus provides important insights into early Tudor constructions of the gendered qualities of speech in love discourse, and offers a suggestive frame for reading Wyatt's love poetry. The women in Wyatt's verse conspicuously refuse to conform to the 'virtues' defined by the court performance: they might be beautiful but they repudiate constancy, and are instead aligned to the 'vices' in their disdain, scorn, unkindness and, especially, the slipperiness of their words. The idea of love at the Tudor court, as scholars have recognised, is organised, regulated and articulated via literary constructions and conventions.⁹⁸ How a Catullan narrative might be activated by Wyatt is what this chapter turns to next.

desires. Elegiac imagery drawing especially on *militia amoris* is strong in this poem. The Horgan translation (1994) gives Malebouche as 'Evil-Tongue'.

⁹⁵ Malebouche thus seems to share some qualities with the Latin *fama*: the discourse of *fama* and *infamia* are particularly important to Sulpicia's poetry discussed in chapter 4; on *fama* in literature, see Hardie (2012).

⁹⁶ Fragment B, 3871-2. Usages documented in the *Oxford English Dictionary* show that Malebouche, during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, is also used as a personification of slander, something much closer to the concept of *maledictus* traced in Catullus and the *Pro Caelio*.

⁹⁷ The *OED* notes *male* is the feminine form of *mal* to agree with *bouche* which is feminine.

⁹⁸ Stevens (1961) transcribes Henry VIII's manuscript poetry and draws comparisons with Wyatt's lyrics; Heale (1990) and Irish (2011) both examine the love poems written by Margaret Douglas, Henry's niece, and Thomas Howard and unpack the way they draw on literary love narratives to execute their own story of clandestine marriage. These poems appear in the Devonshire manuscript, a kind of courtly anthology which is also an important source for Wyatt's poems: see Stevens 118. On Elizabethan courtship letters breaking down the distinction between 'art' and 'life', see Whigham (1981).

There are numerous poems by Wyatt which draw directly on Catullus: 'What Means This?', for example, with its depiction of the narrator's failed tongue whenever he sits near his mistress re-writes c.51;⁹⁹ epigram 38 about the narrator's stealing of a kiss and consequent punishment replays c.99, though the male Juventius is changed for a female mistress;¹⁰⁰ poem 106, especially, with its stark acknowledgement of the cruelty and moral failings of the mistress from whom the narrator still cannot withdraw his love is a direct homage to c.76.¹⁰¹ This section focuses on 'They Flee From Me' and 'Whoso List to Hunt', two of the most discussed of Wyatt's poems.¹⁰² The latter, especially, frequently cited as 'evidence' of Wyatt's love for Anne Boleyn and his consequent competition with Henry VIII ('Caesar'), has been read as offering an authentic insight into the politics, both erotic and otherwise, of the Tudor court.¹⁰³ Both texts are revisited here because they include direct representations of ventriloquised female speech. In terms of this chapter's interests, the two poems stage a dialogic performance of gendered voices which, it is argued, draws on Catullus. A secondary concern is with Wyatt's practice of imitation: 'Whoso List to Hunt' foregrounds an intertextual struggle as it negotiates a relationship with Catullus, Roman elegy and Petrarch. In untangling the way in which this poem maps out

⁹⁹ See above.

¹⁰⁰ *Surripui tibi dum ludis, mellite Iuventi | saviolum dulci dulcius ambrosia. | verum id non impune tuli*, 'I stole a kiss from you, honey-sweet Juventius, while you were playing, a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia. But not unpunished', *Cat.* 99.1-3; 'Alas, madam, for stealing of a kiss | have I so much your mind there offended? | Have I then done so grievously amiss | that by no means it may be amended?', Wyatt 38.1-4.

¹⁰¹ '*Non iam illud quaero, contra me ut diligat illa, | aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit*, 'No longer is this my prayer, that she should love me in return, or, for that is impossible, that she would consent to be chaste' *Cat.* 76.23-24; cf. 'Though I cannot your cruelty constrain | for my goodwill to favour me again, | Though my true and faithful love | have no power your heart to move' etc. Wyatt's 106.1-4.

¹⁰² e.g. Lever (1956), Greenblatt (1980), Ferry (1983), Mason (1986), Estrin (1994), Heale (1998), Falconer (2000), Cheney (2012).

¹⁰³ Greenblatt (1980) reads the poem as a text expressing the frustrations of a social group to the increasing centralisation of Tudor monarchy; Heale (1998) takes a more gendered approach and suggests that the object of the hunt may be any woman, or 'woman' as a figure for courtly favour. Dating Wyatt's poems is notoriously difficult: he came to court in 1516 when he was just 13, and worked as a diplomat from the mid-1520s travelling to the French court and around Italy in 1526-27. His love poems are traditionally dated to before 1536, the year in which Anne Boleyn was executed. Ballade 197 is a poetic lament for the men condemned and executed as Anne's lovers.

its own literary and creative space, we also consider the way in which *imitatio* is made to work in this instance.

‘They Flee from Me’ is one of Wyatt’s enigmatic texts where ‘they’ shifts to ‘she’, where a past which ‘hath been otherwise’ (8) is set in contrast to the bleak present, and where gendered qualities in the protagonists are both oppositional and contradictory. There is a strange, alien quality to the women in this poem who are likened to deer or birds, and the imagery of hunting - flee, stalk (1, 2) - is clear.¹⁰⁴ Comparisons have been made with Ovid’s elegies: 1.5 where Corinna arrives in the narrator’s chamber *tunica velata recincta*, ‘veiled in an unfastened tunic’ (*Amores* 1.5.9), and 3.7 where she flounces out of their bed in her bare feet (*nudos... pedes*) again *tunica velata soluta*, ‘veiled in an unbound tunic’ (*Amores* 3.7.81-82).¹⁰⁵ Ovid’s descriptions of Corinna can be compared with Wyatt’s women ‘with naked foot stalking in my chamber’ (2), and ‘in thin array after a pleasant guise | when her loose gown from her shoulder did fall’ (10-11). We can note, too, the dreamlike nature of Ovid’s 1.5, and the narrator’s response in Wyatt that ‘it was no dream: I lay broad waking’ (15). *Amores* 3.7 is a provocative intertext for ‘They Flee’ since the elegy depicts ‘Ovid’s’ impotence, but while the failure is literal and physical in Ovid, in Wyatt’s text it is turned to a more generalised powerlessness. So a debt to Ovid is clear in terms of setting and visual detail, but the emotional register of this poem is very far from the playfulness of Ovid’s elegies. The erotic satisfaction of *Amores* 1.5 and the rueful, self-deprecating tone of 3.7 are replaced by the raw and anguished emotionalism of Catullan texts as Wyatt’s narrator rehearses his own betrayal by a fickle and untrustworthy woman. Especially telling is the emphasis on her unreliable speech.

The opening stanza is built on contrasts which foreground the shifting nature of ‘they’: flee/seek, tame/wild. They ‘do not remember’ (4) while the

¹⁰⁴ e.g. Berthoff on reading them as falcons, hunting birds at the Henrician court (1963), Friedman (1967), Heale (1998). Estrin (1994) 128-33 and Bates (2013) 94-107 read this poem as a distortion of the Actaeon myth.

¹⁰⁵ e.g. Nelson (1963), notes to the Rebholz edition of Wyatt. *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7 are discussed in detail in chapter 3. All quotations from Ovid’s *Amores* are from Kenney (1961, 1994).

narrator can do nothing but replay the past; they 'range | busily seeking with a continual change' (6-7) while the narrator is a still centre, steadfast, fixed. The second stanza, a rehearsal of an assignation that 'once' (9) took place, builds up the remembered details and culminates, significantly, not in the unclothing of the woman ('when her loose gown from her shoulders did fall', 11), or her kiss ('therewithal sweetly did me kiss', 13) but in an act of speech: 'and softly said, 'Dear heart, how like you this?' (14). These words spoken by the mistress positioned at the end of the stanza, and at the point at which past turns into present, places interpretative weight on this instance of female speech: her words become the central motif upon which the poem turns, an image of the discontinuity which haunts the poem and which is itself gendered feminine.

'It was no dream' (15) following straight after this instance of female speech thus seems to refer to the occurrence of the words themselves, not just to the occasion of them. The narrator reads them as indicative of a compact between him and his lover, parallel to the *foedus* which Catullus strives to construct with Lesbia, but, as is the case in the Catullan precedent, the woman's words prove impermanent:

But all is turned thorough my gentleness
 Into a strange fashion of forsaking.
 And I have leave to go of her goodness
 And she also to use newfangledness
 16-19

'Gentleness' here is a loaded, even overloaded, term: it encompasses the narrator's mild temper and conduct, but also his social status, the idea of good breeding and courtesy - the notion of the courtly gentleman. Gentleness, too, as seen in the *château vert*, is one of the ideal qualities of the courtly male lover. In contrast, the woman displays 'strangeness', a quality of the female 'vices' from the *château vert*, meaning off-handedness, carelessness. Wyatt's woman certainly deserts her lover ('a strange fashion of forsaking') but he also positions her as disowning her own words. Her speech, as the Catullan narrator realised

before, is always ephemeral, never stable. Wyatt's narrator wishes to read her specific words of seduction, tied to a single occasion, as a generalised contract of love between them - and is proved fatally mistaken.

But since that I so kindly am served
I would fain know what she hath deserved
20-21

'Kindly' is an ironic and bitter reference to the quality of Kindness as one of the 'virtues' of the courtly mistress, but also shifts his specific mistress into the sphere of 'woman' as category, or 'kind'. It has the sense of being congruent with nature, so that the verbal transience exposed by the poem is positioned as innately female, a quality of the feminine against which masculinity may be defined.¹⁰⁶ The changeability, unpredictability, and 'newfangledness' (19) of the mistress thus serve to delineate and construct an oppositional masculinity which is steady, steadfast and true - even if those qualities lead to loss and pain.

The final words of the poem, 'what she hath deserved', return to the question of how the woman should be requited for her betrayal - and, in a Catullan sense, the poem itself serves as an exposure of her perfidy. This text is certainly far more restrained in terms of invective, in line with Tudor rather than Roman cultural mores, but still serves as a potent indictment of female duplicitous sexuality, lying and betrayal.

It can be seen that Wyatt's renewal of a Catullan discourse is a stealthy one: it may not be traceable in easily attributable quotations, but terms such as faith (*fides*) and oath (loosely attached to the idea of *foedus*) recur with notable frequency. Most markedly, we can trace Wyatt's response to Catullus in a comprehensive erotic narrative built around the idea of a haunting obsession with a fickle, unfaithful and deceitful mistress.

We looked earlier at how Cicero's oration draws on a discourse of gendered speech shared with Catullus: Wyatt's concern with female words can

¹⁰⁶ See Breitenberg (1996) on how masculinity and femininity are defined against and in relation to each other in early modern England.

also be traced in texts drawn, supposedly, from 'life' rather than literature - Henry VIII's love letters to Anne Boleyn.¹⁰⁷ Seth Lehrer has also read Henry's letters as being 'shaped by literary figures', but while he positions them against Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (another text concerned with female inconstancy), they can also be read productively alongside Catullus and Wyatt.¹⁰⁸ In switching between 'I' and a royal 'we', often in a single missive, Henry's letters oscillate between being the utterances of a man and a monarch - they thus serve as witness to the way in which a discourse of female vocal unreliability circulates in both private and public contexts.¹⁰⁹ Only one side of the correspondence has survived so Anne's historical 'voice' is missing: it is, possible, however, to reconstruct a vocal presence for her based on Henry's responses to her missing words so that, on one level, she is as ventriloquised as are Lesbia and Wyatt's women.

Letter 1, provisionally dated to 1526, situates itself relatively early in Henry's courtship.¹¹⁰ In it, he articulates his anxiety about Anne's constancy: 'et que par absens vostre affection ne leur soit diminué, ('and that by absence your

¹⁰⁷ For biographical discussions on Henry's letters to Anne, see Fraser (1992) 128-9; Ives (2004) 84-90; on letter-writing as a social practice, Barton & Hall (2000); on Renaissance letter-writing, Whigham (1981), Lerer (1997), Schneider (2005).

¹⁰⁸ Lerer (1997), quotation from 3. Blevins (2004) 12 suggests that 'courtly love' literature, such as Chaucer's *Troilus*, draws on Ovid, understood here as a vague term for what should be more precisely defined as Roman love elegy.

¹⁰⁹ e.g. in letter 1, 'muy et mon cuer', ('me and my heart') changes to 'en nos faisant rementevoire', ('bringing to our mind'), and 'o moins de nostre chosté', ('at least on our side'). Nine of the seventeen extant letters hand-written by Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn were in French. All seventeen were published in English translation by Thomas Hearne in his *Robert of Avelbury* (1720), and in the third volume of the Harleian Miscellany, but the French originals have never been published in England. The seventeen letters ended up in the Vatican library, possibly stolen from Anne Boleyn by the Imperial or Venetian ambassador. Napoleon removed the letters in 1797 and deposited them in the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris where they were transcribed by M. Meon, the manuscript librarian. The letters were handed back to the pope in October 1815 and remain in the Vatican library today. The French transcriptions, together with French translations of the English letters, were published by George-Adrien Crapelet in Paris, 1826, and this is the edition from which French quotations are taken: the translations are mine. I have followed Crapelet's numbering but, where different, have noted other editors' ordering: the letters are not dated, but some can be provisionally ascribed according to external events. Letter 1 is numbered thus in all collections and has been dated to autumn 1526 by Ives (2004), 1527 by St. Clare Byrne (1936).

¹¹⁰ Fraser (1992) 128 dates Henry's pursuit from Shrovetide 1526; Ives (2004) 90 suggests Henry noticed Anne in 1522 from around the time of the *château vert* but also dates his courtship from 1526.

affection for them [him and his heart] may not be lessened'). He contrasts this fear of her fickleness with his own fidelity: 'ainsi fait-il de nostre amour, car per absence nous sūmes eloinés, et neumoins elle garde sa farveur on moins de nostre chosté, aiant en enspoire la parayll du vostre', ('and so it is with my love for through absence we are far apart and yet it retains its fervour at least on my side, having the hope that it is the same on yours'). In order to shore up his 'hope', rather than confidence in her love, Henry sends Anne a present, 'chose le plus appertiant à cella qui m'est possible... c'est à dire ma picture myse en braselette', ('something the most connected to that [his physical presence] as is possible... that is my picture set in a bracelet'). This piece of jewellery containing the king's picture is made to embody his presence, a vivid reminder of him as lover but also sovereign which acts to police her possible infidelity - a kind of eroticised handcuff worn on her person, which may remind us of the collar 'graven with diamonds' worn by the hind in Wyatt's 'Whoso List to Hunt'.¹¹¹

Letter 2 makes reference to a rumour that has reached the ears of the king: 'on m'a averty que l'opinion en quoy je vous laissez est de toute asture changé', ('I have been told that the opinion [of me] in which I left you has utterly changed'), and that Anne is deliberately staying away from court. He claims that her behaviour is unwarranted and that he has done nothing to offend her ('je m'assure n'avoir jamais faite faute'), positioning her as a capricious mistress, subject to what Wyatt terms 'newfangledness'. He continues with the more ominous assertion 'if I heard for truth that you voluntarily desired this [her absence from him], I could do no less than to complain of my ill fortune while abating little by little my great folly' ('si je entendois pur verité que volonterement vous la desiries, je n'en puis moins fere sinon plaindre ma mauvais fortune en rebatant peu à peu ma grande folie'). The trope of the mistress who is inconstant when away from the physical presence of her lover

¹¹¹ On the bracelet as love token in poetry, see also Donne's 'The Relic', 'The Bracelet', Herrick's 'The Bracelet: To Julia', 'The Bracelet of Pearl: To Silvia'. 'To Julia' supports the idea suggested here of the bracelet as a metaphorical handcuff: 'Why I tie about thy wrist | Julia, this silken twist; | For what other reason is't | But to show thee how, in part, | Thou my pretty captive art?' (1-5).

(as is the case in Chaucer's *Criseyde*) is certainly present here, and this letter also stresses the arbitrary nature of her fickleness which is not, he claims, a response to something he has done. The rhetorical pose of the lover who discovers some fault in his mistress replays Catullan rhetoric, though the narrators in Catullus and Wyatt are never able to draw back from their 'great folly'.

One final example here from letter 4 alludes directly to Anne's letters of reply, putting the emphasis firmly on the complexity of interpreting female words and the hermeneutic crisis to which they give rise:¹¹²

En debatant d'apper moy le continu de vous letter, me suis mis en grande agonye, non shachant commant les entendres, ou à mon desavantages come en aucune lieu le munstrés, ou à mon avantage comme en des aucunes aultres je les entende, vous suppliant de bien ceur me valoire certyffiere expressément vostre intention entire tochant l'amoure entre nous deux.

In debating with myself the contents of your letters, I am placed in a great agony not knowing how to hear them, whether to my disadvantage as shown in some places, or to my advantage as I hear in some others, begging you with all my heart that you will let me know expressly your whole intention with regard to the love between us two.

Anne's words are here positioned as opaque, dense and difficult, able to be read (heard, in this letter) in different ways, evading a single and defined meaning no matter how many times the reader (listener) pores over them. They become open texts, artful, devious, even possibly deceitful. The reader is forced to demand clarity in requesting another letter to decipher and make plain what is hidden in this one: 'vous suppliant me faire entire responce de ceste ma rude letter, a quoy et en quoy me puis fiere', ('begging you to make me a full [also clear] response to this my rude letter, so that I may know on what and how far I am able to trust'). Her tricky letter is contrasted to his 'rude' one, a dichotomy seen again in the opposition of Wyatt's blunt speech against that of his women.

¹¹² This letter is numbered 4 in all editions, and is dated by St.Clare Byrne to 1527: in it Henry makes reference to having been struck by the dart of love for more than one year ('ayant esté plus que ung anné dernyr attaynte du dart d'amours'). See also Breitenberg (1996) 175-177 on masculine sexual jealousy being figured as an 'anxiety of interpretation' in *Othello*.

There is a particularly notable Catullan moment in this letter where Henry compares the different kinds of love that Anne might have for him: ‘si vous ne me aimés de aultres sorte que d’amoure commune, c’est nome ne vous est point appropriée: car il denote ung singularis, lequel est bien longné de la commune’, (‘if you only love me with the other sort of common love, this name [of ‘mistress’] is hardly appropriate: for it denotes a singular love, which is a long way from the common sort’). C.73.3, discussed earlier, contains the line ‘I loved you then, not only as the common sort love a mistress’. Henry certainly inverts the subject, but a Catullan allusion is possible.

What can be seen, then, is the way in which Henry VIII’s letters draw on familiar literary discourses that meld those of ‘courtly’ love, the Petrarchan, and the Catullan. Themes of constancy versus fickleness become gendered, and the very medium of words spoken or written by Anne is rendered doubtful and complex in comparison to the ‘rude’ or unsophisticated transparency and forthrightness of Henry’s own letters. The depiction of a capricious, variable woman throws Henry’s own masculinity into relief: he may be the beseeching wooer, but his words are true, direct, candid and honest.

The second Wyatt text to be considered, ‘Whoso List to Hunt’, is clearly a rewriting of Petrarch’s sonnet 190, ‘Una candida cerva’.¹¹³ Wyatt’s abandonment of the Neoplatonic scheme which structures Petrarch’s poem (and sequence) is, however, particularly stark and it is worth paying attention to the ways in which the two texts diverge.¹¹⁴ Petrarch’s hind is a figure for the Christianised idealisation of Laura whose virtue makes her inviolable and untouchable. The drama of the poem resides in the tension between the narrator’s desires which are caught between the spiritual, invested in the hind, and the more earthly. The

¹¹³ e.g. Falconer (2000) who notes earlier bibliography.

¹¹⁴ On Neoplatonism see e.g. Blevins (2004) 14; Bembo’s speech in chapter 4 of Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) is an extended exposition of its application to Renaissance courtly thought, art and literature. It is also worth noting the extent to which Wyatt’s body of poetry follows Catullan form: unlike Petrarch and later sixteenth century writers such as Sidney, Wyatt’s work is not organised as a sequence, or confined to the sonnet mode. Instead, he produces fractured poems which are frequently enigmatic or partial, and which display shifting metres and poetic forms. The most prevalent for Wyatt’s love poetry is the sonnet, song and epigram, the latter of which was an important strand to Catullan reception in the Tudor period.

final fall of the narrator into the water, and the consequent disappearance of the hind serves as a marker of his inability to raise his mind above her flesh. So the poem is, in a way, one of failure, but it is a wry, self-deprecating, even gently humorous failure, one which speaks potently of physical desire as a very human, however troublesome, quality. Elements within the Catullan verse which underpin Roman ethical and civic concepts such as *fides*, *foedus*, and *pietas*, become Christianised in Petrarch's verse, and the setting of the sonnet is that of a rarefied landscape quite unlike the specificity of Catullus' Rome. Lesbia's ultimate unattainability by 'Catullus', despite the fact that theirs is, the texts imply, a consummated sexual relationship, becomes transmuted into a spiritual allegory, and 'Petrarch's' betrayal is that of his own bodily nature, rather than any treachery on the part of Laura.

Wyatt's sonnet reshapes Petrarch's in multiple ways and it is possible to trace the way in which it situates itself in relation to Petrarch, Catullus, and contemporary Tudor culture. The classical trope of the erotic hunt draws on Ovid, especially, and erotic elegy more generally, though it is not a figure associated with Catullus.¹¹⁵ Sonnet 190, of course, is not a hunt so much - despite the presence of a hind - as a hallucinatory vision. Wyatt's setting is shifted from the almost surreal Petrarchan landscape to the specific backdrop of a Tudor hunt, a typical pastime at the Henrician court, and one acutely associated with a public display of virility.¹¹⁶ The competitive nature of the chase where the narrator is ranked against his peers ('I am of them that farthest cometh behind', 4) gives the text a social dimension absent from Petrarch's poem which is inhabited solely by the narrator and the hind. This social consciousness relates the poem to Catullan verse situated in a recognisably

¹¹⁵ Ovid's Apollo and Daphne episode from the *Metamorphoses* (1.452-567) has long been recognised as the central myth of Petrarch's *canzoniere* see e.g. Greene (1982) 127-146, Freccero (1986), Barnard (1987), Martindale (1988), Hardie (1991,1999) and especially Estrin (1994), more recently Braden (2000), Heyworth (2009). Nicholl (1980) also draws attention to the intertextuality between Apollo and Daphne in the *Metamorphoses*, the *Amores* and Propertius 1.1.

¹¹⁶ See Bates (2013) on hunting as a 'symbolic activity' (5) associated with 'heroic masculinity' (1) and as 'a metaphor for the operation and predations of desire' (36); 44-107 for her reading of this Wyatt poem.

detailed Rome where ‘Catullus’ own status - as lover, but also as Roman man - is always at stake, always being negotiated. Two of Henry VIII’s love letters to Anne Boleyn, tentatively dated to 1527 and 1528 respectively, show the king, too, drawing on this literary motif of the erotic hunt.

In letter 10 Henry names himself a hunter: ‘je vous envoye per ce porteur ung bouke je tué hersoire bien terde de ma main, esperant que quant vous en mangerés, il vous sovendra du chasseur’, (‘I send you by this bearer a buck I killed late yesterday evening by my own hand, hoping that when you eat of it, it will remind you of the hunter’).¹¹⁷ In letter 9, too, Henry utilises the idiom and imagery of the hunt: ‘and seeing my darling is absent I can do no less than to send her some flesh, representing my name, which is hart flesh for Henry’.¹¹⁸ These letters are notable for a number of reasons: firstly, they are testament to a shared erotic discourse that circulates between the literary and ‘life’, just as we saw was the case between Catullus’ Lesbia and Cicero’s Clodia Metelli. Literary erotics, such as those which inform Wyatt’s poetry, offer Henry a script or series of rhetorical postures which he can adopt to portray himself as a lover. Strikingly, the position of the lover is a fluctuating one in his case: he is the successful hunter in the first letter given here, but is the hart in the second where, as he points out, ‘hart’ also means ‘heart’. Henry transforms himself from the subject of the hunt, the *chasseur*, to the object, the hart, which he then bestows upon his mistress. Letter 10, with its visceral emphasis on the killing having been done by the king’s own hand (‘je tué... de ma main’), and his hope that the dead deer will recall its hunter to Anne’s mind (‘il vous sovendra du chasseur’) has a potentially menacing subtext, reminding the recipient of this gift that she, too, is the object of the king’s powerful pursuit - a courtship which ends, literally in the case of Anne, with her dead body.

¹¹⁷ Letter 10 is numbered 10 in the Harleian and in the Vatican collection but St.Clare Byrne dates it to 1527 and orders it as 5 in her edition (1936).

¹¹⁸ Letter 9 was written in English, is ordered 9 also in Harleian and the Vatican, but 12 in St.Clare Byrne who dates it to June 22-30 1528: quotations from letters originally written in English are taken from St.Clare Byrne (1936) which have been modernised in terms of spelling.

These letters demonstrate how the qualities of the courtly lover are prescribed by literary discourse (as we also saw earlier in the *château vert*) and enacted in apparently non-literary texts - though letters, as scholars have pointed out, can never be read as innocent or transparent documents.¹¹⁹ Courtly masculinity, when part of a lover's discourse, may be fluid and, to some extent, unfixed, even contradictory. Masculinity may reside in other qualities quite separate from the obvious 'manly' ones, and to assume the posture of the victim of the hunt may not be as emasculating, or as permanent, as might be assumed - an important consideration when it comes to reading the gendered status of Wyatt's narrators. The displayed qualities of the courtly lover, it seems, do not always align with normalised standards of political masculinity. Henry may be, metaphorically, bending his knee to Anne Boleyn when he sends her his 'hart', but he is still always the king and retains the power of his monarchical authority (as letter 10 reminds the reader) even as he seems to abdicate it in his role of the lover. The myth of Actaeon seems to underpin Henry's stance and he changes from being the aggressive Apollo of letter 10, to channelling the dismembered Actaeon in letter 9, in the process turning Anne from Daphne to Diana.¹²⁰

Reading the Diana and Actaeon myth into 'Whoso List to Hunt' foregrounds the way this text situates itself against Petrarch's 190 and Catullus' Lesbia. Diana is a virgin huntress, and both qualities - her chastity and her status as a hunter - place her, symbolically, outside the *domus* or 'house': she is unfettered by marriage, and is most usually figured freely roaming the woods with her band of maidens. One of the signifiers of the disruptive nature of both Lesbia and Clodia Metelli is their propensity to be seen operating outside of the Roman household, an ideological space to which 'good' women are usually bound.¹²¹ One way of interpreting the Actaeon narrative is as an encounter between mortality and

¹¹⁹ See especially Lerer (1997) on the status of letters at the Henrician court.

¹²⁰ See *Met.* 3.138-252 on Actaeon, the hunter who gets turned by Diana into a stag and is torn apart by his own hounds; Barkan (1980) on the way Diana and Actaeon structures other Renaissance literary texts; Vickers (1981) on this myth and the blazon, Bates (2013) on Actaeon and Tudor metaphors of hunting.

¹²¹ e.g. Boyd (1987) 200, Leen (2000).

divinity, specifically gendered as a mortal man and a goddess.¹²² Diana is sacrosanct and Actaeon's crime, however unintentional, is to have violated her sacred nature by seeing her bathing. Unravelling the complex re-use of Diana motifs that reside in 'Una cerva candida', 'Whoso List to Hunt', Henry VIII's letters and Catullus focuses the way these texts are implicated in and against each other.

Laura as a Neoplatonic image of eternal beauty and truth is well established: we might even be tempted to read her as a Christianised rendering of the virgin Diana, supported by the hunting associations activated by the hind. Her unassailable nature is inscribed on the hind's collar: 'nessun mi tocchi', ('let no-one touch me'); and the lack of specificity in the landscape locates her metaphorically in a spiritual rather than earthly realm.¹²³ Yet the adjective 'candida' in Petrarch's first line, translated as 'purest white', might draw disturbing associations with the profane Lesbia of Catullus. In c.68.70 Lesbia is described as *mea... candida diva*, 'my shining or bright, goddess'.¹²⁴ The epithet draws inverse comparisons between the divine purity of Laura encoded through the unadulterated whiteness of the hind, and Lesbia. Lesbia may well be dazzling in her beauty, but *candida* is applied to her at the point at which she arrives for a clandestine and adulterous sexual assignation with 'Catullus' at the house of Allius: her brightness in c.68 is all physical, and her glittering appearance here is set in opposition to the corruption of her morals depicted in other poems. Nevertheless, the word *candida* in itself creates an intertextual conduit which connects Petrarch's Laura in an unsettling fashion with Lesbia - indeed, it draws attention to Petrarch's Neoplatonic scheme which moralises Lesbia (as well as later elegiac mistresses). The speech attributed to Wyatt's hind positions itself within this discourse in an acutely problematic fashion, creating a complex

¹²² See chapter 3 on this trope in *Amores* 1.5; Barkan (1980) finds other literary uses of this model in e.g. Bottom's meeting with Titania; and Hackett (1995) discusses its use in texts which figure Elizabeth as a Diana figure.

¹²³ All quotations from Petrarch's sonnets are from Mortimer (2002).

¹²⁴ Ovid's playful evocation of this line in his *candida dividua* in relation to Corinna in *Am.* 1.5.10 is discussed in chapter 3.

cluster of allusions built around notions of the divine, the sexual, and the undomesticated.

Wyatt's sonnet ends with the words of his hind: '*Noli me tangere*, for Caesar's I am | and wild for to hold, though I seem tame', (12-14). The translation of Petrarch's '*nessun mi tocchi*' into *noli me tangere* foregrounds the text's shift away from a Petrarchan model towards a Latin elegiac one. The Latin diction, however familiar to a courtly audience, also sits in contrast to the frank and blunt Englishness of the previous lines with their use of homely proverbs ('sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind', 8) and the alliteration associated with a middle English poetic tradition ('as she fleeth afore | fainting I follow', 6-7). Female words, as positioned in this text, may be described as being written in 'letters plain' (11) but are shown to be ornate, decorative ('graven with diamonds', 11), and fraught with ambiguity. *Noli me tangere*, of course, is taken from the Vulgate when the newly-resurrected Christ speaks to Mary Magdalene: *Dicit ei Jesus: noli me tangere*, 'Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not', John, 20.17.¹²⁵ An apocryphal story also existed that Julius Caesar had had deer in England marked with the words *Noli me tangere quia Caesaris sum*.¹²⁶ Placing these words into the mouth of Wyatt's hind thus initiates a set of complex, sometimes contradictory intertexts: the blasphemous re-use of Christ's words to Mary Magdalene; the evocation of England's Roman past; Petrarch's prior poem; and the contemporary context of England's own 'Caesar'. Attributing Christ's words to the hind highlights further her distance from the sanctity of Petrarch's Laura and a return to the profane model of Lesbia: 'do not touch me' serves as a command but also, in the hind's mouth, as an invitation, evoking the seductive allure of the forbidden - a disconcerting, even shocking, re-use of speech taken from the mouth of Christ. What was an encounter with a mysterious divinity in the Vulgate and Petrarch, becomes something sensuous and erotic, teasing, taunting in Wyatt. In recalling Actaeon's forbidden vision of Diana it is also perilous - and Danger, we remember, is one of the female vices in the *château*

¹²⁵ English translation from the Authorised King James Version, Oxford University Press, 1997.

¹²⁶ See Bath (1979) on the legend of Caesar's deer.

vert. The weary exhaustion of the narrator ('the vain travail hath wearied me so sore', 3; 'my wearied mind', 5; 'fainting I follow', 7) foreshadows the fate of Actaeon torn apart by his own hounds, here serving as figures for the narrator's self-wounding, even self-destructive, desire, itself a reminder of the Catullan narrative.

The hind's words are 'graven with diamonds', stones associated with chastity and protection from lust.¹²⁷ Diamonds are precious and brilliant, but they are also known as the hardest of substances, and are used metaphorically in this way in the *Roman de la Rose*: 'herte as hard as dyamaunt' (4385). To be marked with diamonds thus has the contrary implications that the hind needs to be policed against her own lust, yet is also hard-hearted, or, in the terms used in the *château vert*, displays Disdain, Scorn, Unkindness. The recollection of Lesbia is strong in the combination of an unruly sexual appetite, combined with a refusal to comply with culturally prescribed gendered qualities: the hind is aligned with the 'vices' of love which serve as obstacles to the (male) lover, rather than the 'virtues' which define the ideal courtly mistress.

The second half of the hind's 'speech' in Wyatt is a clear deviation from, and addition to, Petrarch's sonnet, and expresses powerfully the nature of the hind and the contrary language in which it is conveyed: 'and wild for to hold, though I seem tame' (14). The distance between surface and substance is explicit, the differential between what the woman seems, and what she is. The dichotomy of 'wild' and 'tame' feels particularly gendered, drawing on the paradigm of the uncontrollable nature of women who therefore need to be ruled, mastered and domesticated by men.¹²⁸ The hind roams free, seemingly at her will, and though she gestures towards courtly allegiances ('for Caesar's I am', 13), she seems to have made 'outside' into her own territory: she claims uncivil wildness to herself.

¹²⁷ Mortimer (2002) note to sonnet 190. Petrarch's hind is ornamented with diamonds and topaz, both stones of chastity.

¹²⁸ e.g. the biblical Eve for Wyatt's readers.

‘Wild for to hold’ also has overt sexual overtones, conjuring up an image of unmanageable, ferocious, almost feral, female sexuality, a reminder of the monstrous image of Lesbia with her three hundred lovers in c.11. The hind’s earlier fleeing (‘as she fleeth before’, 6) now becomes a form of deliberately crafted and provocative foreplay since she, as seen from her confident and commanding tone here, is in no danger. Indeed, as Chaucer’s Pandarus makes clear, to seem to run in order to be chased is a standard move in the game of courtly seduction: ‘ek som tyme it is craft to seme fle | fro thing which in effect men hunte faste’ (*Troilus and Criseyde*, 1.747-8). What initially seems to be a form of subversion on the part of the hind, turns out to be an acceptance of the female role in the practice of this form of courtly love. By seeming to flee, she enables the male role of hunter and pursuer; by declaring her own sexual wildness, she justifies his taming and domesticating of her.¹²⁹ The role of Actaeon becomes a ritual posture adopted by the male lover but, while he expresses his weariness with the pursuit, his abject failure to possess, even his metaphorical dismemberment when Henry VIII offers his ‘hart’ to Anne Boleyn, it is the deer, in Henry’s letter 10, who ends up dead.

What can be seen, then, from Wyatt’s texts are the ways in which ventriloquised female speech is put to work in constructing and maintaining what it means to be gendered masculine and feminine in this discourse of love. Gender difference, in these texts, is constructed as oppositional: that is, masculinity is portrayed, by implication, to be what femininity is not. The construction of the feminine serves to affirm and legitimate both the status of masculinity, and also the powers and privileges that accrue to it. The power in ‘Whoso List to Hunt’ seems to reside with the hind, as it does in Petrarch’s sonnet, but the abbreviated and unfinished chase has its end in Henry’s letter. There the internal logic of the hunt reaches its approved end and the deer is *tué... de ma main*, literally killed by the authoritative, and eloquent, hand of the king. The role of the male hunter slips seamlessly from that of Actaeon back into

¹²⁹ The setting for the hunt, too, is most usually a deer-park, a cultivated area which underscores the artificiality of the rhetoric around the pursuit.

Apollo, and the hind is turned from Diana into Daphne, known forever as the possession of Apollo.¹³⁰ Even the boasted wildness of the hind is shown to conceal a ritualised obedience to an overarching rhetorical scheme - wild, in the mouth of the hind, is a form of tameness.

The hind's voice in this poem is set in an intertextual struggle with the prior voices of Lesbia and Laura. She appropriates Laura's words directly but translates them into Latin, in doing so turning them into something sacrilegious, as are Lesbia's broken oaths. The words themselves become unstable in her mouth, foregrounding the shifting nature of language, how words are calibrated by the person speaking them. Words that might be 'plain', truthful, even holy, in one context, become slippery, distorted, sexualised, impious, when spoken by this woman. So what of masculinity in Wyatt's poem? Catullus 76 seems to be a prime model for the exhausted weariness, disappointment and disillusion which marks this text. The inability of the narrator to leave off his pursuit ('yet may I by no means my wearied mind | draw from the deer', 5-6), reworks 'Catullus' self-exhortation, 'why do you not settle your mind firmly and draw back' (76.11), and the later 'what a lethargy creeps into my inmost joints', (76.21-22).¹³¹

It is certainly possible to read Wyatt's poem as depicting a compromised, deficient form of masculinity, revealing an abject inability to master and overcome one's own weakness. However, by shifting our focus onto the discourse of speech, the narrator's masculinity may be seen to be recuperated as is that of 'Catullus'. The characteristics of the narratorial voice are those of honesty, forthrightness, even bluntness. His thoughts are couched in simple and straightforward language, a contrast to the Latinate diction of the hind. The very depiction of the narrator's own impotency and failure ('I am of them that farthest cometh behind', 4) serves as a testament to the veracity of his words. This poem may provisionally position the hind as powerful in her serene indifference to the pursuit of the narrator, even taunting him with his own

¹³⁰ "Arbor eris certe" dixit "mea!", ' "You will always be my tree", he said', *Met.* 1.558, where the syntax puts the stress on Apollo's possessive *mea*.

¹³¹ *Quin tu animo offirmas atque istinc teque reducis [...]; quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus | expulit.*

impotence - and yet the representation of powerlessness can itself be read as a construction of a form of masculinity, one which depends on speaking with truth and candour.

Wyatt's Catullus, then, is different again from the Catullus of Skelton and Leland discussed earlier. Central to Wyatt's love poetry is the concept of the unworthy mistress, epitomised by the Catullan notion of *odi et amo*, 'I hate and I love'.¹³² She turns her back on the chaste virtue of Petrarch's Laura and, instead, flaunts her relationship to the profane, yet endlessly fascinating, Lesbia. Wyatt proves himself a sophisticated reader of Catullus as he reworks the Catullan anxiety about speech and masculinity, and gives it a resonance complicit with Tudor concerns. Importantly, while both sets of texts certainly draw on generalised misogynistic ideas of women as fickle, unreliable and untrustworthy, they also put these portraits to specific use. It is not just that women's words in their poems are demonstrated to be unruly, deceitful and betraying, but that these qualities of speech are themselves gendered feminine. By contrast, an idea of masculinity is actively constructed within these texts, one which has its basis in vocal integrity and literally 'speaking like a man'

As well as staging a vocal struggle between gendered voices within the poem, 'Whoso List to Hunt' also seems to be self-conscious of its own status as an imitation, so that the poet's voice is also always straining to be heard against the prior utterances of Catullus and Petrarch. 'I know where is an hind', (1) speaks of a pre-existing awareness ('I know'), a return to an earlier intelligence, in literary terms to an earlier poem (Petrarch's sonnet 190), as well as an earlier genre and poetics (Latin love elegy). References to drawing from, following, of coming behind (ll.4, 6, 7) can all be read in metapoetic terms as the poem's acknowledgement of its own belated, imitative status; and the announcement 'I leave off therefore' (7) as an attempt to wrench the text into new territory. The poem both fails and succeeds: the models upon which it draws are not erased (and even the assertion of an attempt is a disingenuous one given the status of

¹³² C.85: *odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris / nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior*, 'I hate and love. Why I do so, perhaps you ask. I know not, but I feel it, and I am in torment'.

imitatio as literary praxis), but maintain a critical presence within the new text. Much of the complexity of Wyatt's sonnet comes from the interrelationships set up with the other texts upon which it draws, and the echoes of Catullus, Ovid, Petrarch, the Vulgate, even Henry VIII's courtship of Anne Boleyn sustain the idea of this text as the site of a convergence of multiplicitous, sometimes contradictory, voices.

It is worth noting that the female deer in this reading, can also be read as representing prior texts ('I know where is an hind'), can act as an embodiment of a previous literary tradition which this poem is pursuing and re-writing. The elegiac mistress as the embodiment of elegy itself is hardly new - Ovid's *Amores* 3.1 even personifies *Elegia*, with one lame foot to signify the elegiac couplet, a hexameter followed by a pentameter - and Petrarch's pursuit of Laura as a figure for poetic laurels is embedded in the scholarly literature. Nevertheless, the presence of this trope in Wyatt - the mistress as text - is another gesture towards Latin love elegy as a precedent, and an acknowledgement of elegy's intense concern with metapoetics. The next chapter turns to this topic in detail and considers how Propertius' figuring of Cynthia as inspiration and embodiment of his texts is read and re-written in Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*.

Chapter 2

“Fool,” said my muse to me’: reading metapoetics in Propertius 2.1 and 4.7, and *Astrophil and Stella* 1

The opening poem of Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* is as much a text about the writing of love poetry as it is a love poem.¹ Astrophil struggles to articulate his desire for Stella but ‘words came halting forth’ (9), and previous poetry, ‘others’ feet’ (11), serves only as an obstruction. Thwarted and frustrated (‘biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite’, 13), Astrophil’s literary impasse is resolved in a surprising manner: “Fool,” said my muse to me; “look in thy heart, and write” (14).²

Although the centrality of *imitatio* to Renaissance poetics is widely recognised, a modern valorisation of originality seems to have obscured quite how provocative a moment this is. Astrophil’s self-conscious striving for literary uniqueness, and his muse’s sponsoring of apparent emotional authenticity as the basis for love poetry (“look in thy heart, and write”, 14) both mark a move away from imitative orthodoxy and towards something more transgressive. This turn,

¹ All quotations from the *Astrophil and Stella* are from Duncan-Jones (1989, revised 2002). The title *Astrophil and Stella* might not be authorial: it first appears in the unauthorised printed edition of the sonnets published by Thomas Newman in 1591: see Duncan-Jones (1989) 357. For other metapoetic readings of the sequence see Prendergast (1995, 1999).

² The readings here assume a separation between the historical Philip Sidney and the fictional Astrophil, a distinction which is not always maintained in Sidney criticism: see e.g. Helgerson (1976) 131-41, Hager (1991) for autobiographical readings; Sinfield (1980) on the ‘radical separation between Sidney and his persona’ of Astrophil (26), Roche (1997) who still insists on seeing this separation as ‘radical’. The sonnet sequence itself confuses these identifications, notably in sonnets 30 and 41: e.g. sonnet 30 refers to Ulster ‘wherewith my father once made it half tame’ (30.10): Sir Henry Sidney was Lord Deputy Governor of Ireland in 1576-8; and sonnet 41 describes a tournament taking place in front of ‘that sweet enemy, France’ (41.4) which has been associated with a Triumph that took place before the French ambassadors to Elizabeth’s court in 1581 at which Sidney was one of the tilts: details are given in Henry Goldwell’s *A Declaration of the Triumph showed before the Queen’s Majesty and the French ambassadors on Whitsun Monday and Tuesday* (1581) in Duncan-Jones (1989). Sonnet 41 deepens the association by having Astrophil refer to how ‘of both sides I do take | my blood from them, who did excel in this’ [tilting] (41.9-10): both Sidney’s father and his mother’s brother, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, were known for their skill at tilting: for biographies of Sidney see Duncan-Jones (1991), Stewart (2000) – nevertheless, despite the text’s own teasing insistence, this chapter reads Astrophil as a poetic construct.

by Astrophil, towards what this chapter goes on to read as a narcissistic poetics, is one which deserves more critical attention than it has so far attracted: what are the implications of Astrophil's rejection of *imitatio* and how are we to interpret what is happening in this sequence presided over by such a muse?

The presence of a muse in sixteenth-century English love poetry as opposed to epic is itself surprising. *Tottel's Miscellany*, for example, primarily a collection of lyrics, many on the subject of love, contains no invocations to any of the muses.³ Even Petrarch in the *canzoniere* addresses Apollo in sonnet 34 but does not call upon him for inspiration.⁴ This contrasts with Petrarch's evocation of an epic muse at the start of his *Africa* (c.1337), a nine-book poem written in Latin hexameter with Scipio Africanus as its hero: 'Muse, you will tell me of the man renowned for his great deeds, redoubtable in war, on whom first noble Africa, subdued by Roman arms, bestowed a lasting name' (*Africa*, 1-4.)⁵ Tasso's later *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) also invokes a muse but draws attention to his resistance to the classical muse and her replacement by Christ: 'O Muse, not you who upon Helicon | garland your brow with long-since-faded bays, | but you who among heavenly choirs don | your golden crown of deathless stars always', 1.2.1-4.⁶

In the *Faerie Queene* Spenser invokes various muses: the most conventional is at the opening to book 1 when she is called upon, in an allusion to *Eclogue* 6, to help make the transition from pastoral to epic poetry: 'for

³ This analysis is based on the Holton & MacFaul edition (2011) which takes its text primarily from Q2, the July 1557 edition in the British Library: one of the first Tudor 'bestsellers', *Tottel's Miscellany* was first published in June 1557, went to a second edition in July the same year and then was reprinted nine times between 1557-1587; as the official title *Songes and Sonettes* indicated, a large number of the poems it contained were Petrarchan in nature including 96 poems by Thomas Wyatt: see Hamrick (2002, 2013). Q8, the 1574 edition, was in the Penshurst family library hence was the edition read by Sidney himself as well as his siblings: Holton & MacFaul (2011) xxxii. On reading miscellanies and the relationships between manuscript and print, see Marotti (1995) 210-219, May (2009) 418-33.

⁴ Quotations from the *canzoniere* are from Mortimer (2002): speaking to Apollo, the Petrarchan narrator asserts 'so shall we both marvel to see again | our lady sit upon the grassy turf | and make with her own arms her own sweet shade' (34.12-14) blending together the figures of Daphne the nymph, Daphne as the metamorphosed laurel tree and Laura into a single body.

⁵ Quotations from *Africa* are from Bergin & Wilson (1977); see Laird (2002) on the muse in *Africa*.

⁶ Quotations from *Gerusalemme Liberata* are from Wickert (2009).

trumpets sterne to change mine Oaten reeds, | and sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds' (1.1.1.4-5).⁷ In book 3 the narrator calls on Clio, the muse of history, as he traces the future offspring of Britomart and Artegall ending in the Tudors and Elizabeth (3.3.4.49). A conscious imitation of Anchises' speech in *Aeneid* 6 when Aeneas is shown a vision of the famous Romans who will spring from his bloodline (6.765-886), Spenser's muse functions here as political authenticator of the Tudor line, bridging both historical and literary time as the Tudor lineage intersects with the Roman: 'for from thy womb a famous Progenie | shall spring, out of the auncient Trojan blood' (3.3.22.5-6).⁸

In sixteenth-century love poetry Astrophil's muse is an anomaly, and her behaviour is startling.⁹ Rather than waiting to be called upon by the poet as is traditionally the case, here she inserts herself into Astrophil's vacillations and bluntly cuts through his hesitations. Irreverent and familiar ('"Fool," said my muse to me'), she serves as a personification of a wayward creative inspiration and a problematic mode of poetic production that, as this chapter goes on to show, is provocatively at odds with the prevailing literary orthodoxies of Sidney's time. What she is doing here and how she orients our reading of the sequence are two of the questions investigated in this chapter.

The figure of a muse may generally be absent from Renaissance love poetry but she is a significant presence in Roman love elegy. Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 ends with an appeal to what we might think of as a specifically elegiac muse who presides over the eleven feet of the elegiac couplet.¹⁰ In Sulpicia's opening poem, too, it is her muse who has won over Venus and thus enabled 'Sulpicia' to attain

⁷ Quotations from the *Faerie Queene* are from Roche (1978). In *Eclogue* 6 Tityrus, a shepherd, wants to sing of *reges et proelia*, 'kings and battles' (3) but is admonished by Apollo and is persuaded to 'woo the rustic Muse on a slender reed' (*agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam*, 8); quotations from the *Eclogues* are from Fairclough revised by Goold (1999); on *Eclogue* 6, Thomas (1979), Knox (1985), Rutherford (1989), Breed (2000), Farrell (2004) 42, Hunter (2006) 21, Davis (2012).

⁸ See Hardie (2004).

⁹ Bates (2007) 52 reads Astrophil's muse as a dominatrix figure drawn from Sidney's Freudian response to his mother.

¹⁰ *Cingere litorea flaventia tempora myrto | Musa, per undenos emodulanda pedes*, 'Gird with the myrtle that loves the shore the golden locks on thy temple, O Muse to be sung to the lyre in elevens', *Am.* 1.1.29-30: Latin quotation from Kenney (1964, revised 1994), translation from Showerman revised by Goold (2002).

the love of Cerinthus.¹¹ Propertius, the first of the elegists proper, engages perhaps most explicitly with a muse figure:

Quaeritis, unde mihi totiens scribantur amores,
unde meus veniat mollis in ora liber.
non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo:
ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit
2.1.1-4¹²

You ask how it is that I compose love songs so often, how it is that my
book sounds so soft upon the lips. It is not Calliope, not Apollo that puts
these songs in my mind: my sweetheart herself creates the inspiration.

The translation here of ‘I compose’ for *scribantur* turns the Latin passive into an active verb. A more accurate translation of the question posed by the Propertian narrator is not so much how ‘I compose’, but how the love poems (*amores*) ‘are written’. ‘Propertius’ seems to be disavowing his own active role as writer of the poem and owner of the poetic imagination which informs it, and instead attributes the inspiration to Cynthia who becomes a form of muse.¹³ It is she who ‘creates’ his *ingenium*, ‘talent, inspiration’, and she does this through an active verb (*facit*) in opposition to the passivity of his composition. The repetition of *unde*, ‘from where’ (1, 2), and *mihi*, ‘to me’ (1, 3) reinforces this sense of the source of creation being external to the poet, to poetry as originating from somewhere beyond the poet’s own imagination. And yet it is not Calliope, the leader of the muses, nor Apollo, the god of music and poetry, who sings (*cantat*) to or through ‘Propertius’, but only a *puella* who creates his inspiration.

The figure of a muse serves, as is well-understood, as a ‘projection of the creative process’ and a ‘personification of literary practice’.¹⁴ But the muse is,

¹¹ *Exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis | attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum*, ‘won over by my Muse’s prayers, Cythera’s queen has brought and placed him in my arms’, 3.13.3-4; all Latin quotations from Sulpicia are from Postgate (1924), translations from Cornish (1962). Chapter 4 offers a fuller discussion of Sulpicia.

¹² All Latin quotations from Propertius are from Heyworth (2007), translations from Goold (1990).

¹³ On Cynthia as a muse and metaliterary figure, McNamee (1993) 224, Keith (1994, 2008: 98-9), Greene (1995), Wiggins (1997) 335, Wyke (2002), Pincus (2004), Johnson (2012) 40.

¹⁴ Spentzou (2002a) 8.

not surprisingly, a far from static metaphor. In the archaic Greek poetry of Hesiod and Homer the muses positioned poetry as a kind of divine epiphany, though certainly not in an unnuanced or unproblematic fashion.¹⁵ Hellenistic poets such as Apollonius of Rhodes and Callimachus, both of whom are significant models for Roman elegy, complicate ideas of inspiration, creativity, and the relationships between literary tradition and innovation.¹⁶ Their texts reflect changing assumptions and ideas about poetry through their engagement with, and manipulation of, programmatic muse encounters.

So when Propertius writes of Cynthia as the source of his inspiration, and when Sidney's *Astrophil* later finds his attempts at writing love poetry hijacked by a condescending and scornful muse, both texts are responding to a complex language of muse figures as carriers of literary discourse. Section 2.1 goes on to read Cynthia not just as *materia* or the Callimachean embodiment of the Propertian text, but as a slippery figure who shifts between being a source of inspiration, possibly negative as well as positive, and taking on the role of a poet in her own right. The implications of a muse figure attaining a voice and story of her own are explored through Propertius 4.7, and are contextualised by two short episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the muses' story to Minerva in book 5, and the story of the sibyl in book 14. By reading Cynthia with Ovid's vulnerable and increasingly compromised muses, as well as with the sibyl figures in the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*, we will trace how these Augustan muse figures work intertextually, and how they prompt and foreground questions of literary orthodoxy, poetic authority and reception.

Section 2.2 traces the problematic transmission of the Propertian text into the Renaissance and locates it in sixteenth-century England. Then, returning to *Astrophil's* muse, section 2.3 considers how *Astrophil and Stella* makes

¹⁵ See Murray (1981, 2002), Spentzou (2002a)

¹⁶ On Apollonius Rhodius and muse figures in the *Argonautica*, see González (2000), Spentzou (2002b) who reads Medea as a form of muse. On Callimachus and his influence on Roman poetry see Hunter (2006); on Callimachus and Virgil's *Eclogue* 6, Knox (1985), Rutherford (1989), Farrell (2004); on *Eclogue* 6 and elegy, Davis (2012); on Propertius as the 'Roman Callimachus', Sullivan (1976) 107-58, Arkins (2005) 19-34, Keith (2008) 45-85,

productive use of Propertian metapoetics to inscribe questions about the right use of the human imagination, and sixteenth-century anxieties about the moral status of poetry within the sonnet sequence.¹⁷ Astrophil's muse in the opening sonnet is, evidently, not Stella and so is not positioned as a simple counterpart to Cynthia.¹⁸ To make sense of how the muse encounter is made to work in this text, *Astrophil and Stella* 1 is framed by readings of two literary essays: Stephen Gosson's 1579 anti-poetic treatise, *The Schoole of Abuse*, and Sidney's own *Defense of Poesy* written some time after December 1579.¹⁹

So the readings of muse figures in this chapter build on previous literature which situates them as complex constructs which encode literary pre-occupations, and which can be used to interrogate how a culture expresses its own concerns, anxieties and beliefs about the nature of imagination and the role of poetry.²⁰ In reading Astrophil's muse as a self-conscious, critical and revisionary response to Propertius's Cynthia, we get an insight into the way Sidney's texts locate themselves in terms of metaliterary discourse, and how they use an engagement with Propertian elegy to respond to, and extend, debates about poetry in the latter part of the sixteenth century in England.

¹⁷ For an alternative reading of Sidney's response to Propertius, see Levy (1984).

¹⁸ There is a playful linkage between Stella and Cynthia in sonnet 2 as Astrophil tells the story of his love: it starts 'Not at first sight' (2.1), a contrast to the opening words of Propertius 1.1, *Cynthia prima*, 'Cynthia first', and then goes on to use the language of *milita amoris* and *servitium amoris*: 'conquest' (2.4), 'to love's decrees I, forced, agreed' (2.7), 'lost liberty | is gone, and now like slave-born Muscovite | I call it praise to suffer tyranny' (2.9-11). On 'Cynthia prima' and the Hellenistic tropes on which it draws, Keith (2008) 45-6; on Propertius and *servitium amoris*, Arkins (2005), Greene (2005a) 241, Kennedy (2012).

¹⁹ On the problematic dating of the *Defence*, see Duncan-Jones (1989) 371.

²⁰ Especially useful on the muse in classical literature are the essays in Spentzou & Fowler (2002): see above on metapoetic readings of *Astrophil* and Propertius respectively.

2.1 ‘My sweetheart herself creates the inspiration’: Cynthia, inspiration and poetic authority in Propertius 2.1 and 4.7

Propertius 2.1 is a programmatic poem foregrounding a concern with questions of inspiration and poetic practice.²¹ It is Cynthia, as we have seen, who is the source of the narrator’s verse, and she explicitly replaces Calliope or Apollo, the more orthodox sponsors of poetry.²² The production of elegy inspired by Cynthia is articulated, not surprisingly, in eroticised terms: *sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi | totum de Coa veste volumen erit*, ‘if I have seen her step forth dazzling in Coan silks, a whole book will emerge from the Coan garment’ (2.1.5-6). The elegiac muse and the text she inspires, as has been frequently discussed, become proxies of each other.²³

But what does it mean that the source of Propertian elegy is a *puella*: irredeemably human rather than divine, and with an overt sexuality? It is not that elegy is simply defining itself as ‘anti-epic’ and counter to everything that epic culturally and literarily stands for, since, as the poem goes on to contend, however playfully, *seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu | tum vero longas condimus Iliadas*, ‘if, her dress torn off, she struggles naked with me, then, be sure of it, I compose long Iliads’ (2.1.13-4). An intimate encounter with Cynthia does not deliver a mere ‘volume’ (*volumen*, 2.1.6) but something more specific, already imbued with cultural value and significance. The text continues: *seu quidquid fecit sive quodcumque locuta | maxima de nihilo nascitur historia*, ‘whatever she has said, whatever she has done, from absolutely nothing is born a

²¹ On 2.1, see Gaisser (1977), Wiggins (1997), Greene (2005), Heyworth (2007) 12-15, Keith (2008) 86-7, Johnson (2012); on programmatic statements in Augustan poetry, Farrell (2004). The transmission and architectural organisation of the Propertian text is particularly problematic: Hutchinson (1984) assumes that what we have is an authorial arrangement, Heyworth (2012) argues against this position. Farrell (2004) points out that the two most usual places for programmatic statements are either at the start of a book, or the middle of a collection (e.g. *Eclogue* 6) thus giving some credence to the position of 2.1.

²² Cynthia’s name derives from a cult title of Apollo, as do those of other elegiac mistresses: Gallus’ Lycoris and Tibullus’ Delia; Catullus’ Lesbia and Sulpicia’s Cerinthus also have associations with poetry and writing: see Gibson (2012), Keith (2012), chapter 4 on Cerinthus.

²³ See above.

great legend' (2.1.15-16).

Nascitur, 'is born, is given birth to' is the same word used in Propertius 2.34 in relation to Virgil's composition of the *Aeneid*: *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade*, 'something greater than the Iliad is coming to birth' (2.34.66). In generic terms, 2.1 thus re-defines epic and elegy in terms of each other, foreshadowing Ovid's mischievous definition of the *Iliad* as 'an adulteress battled over by husband and lover'.²⁴ Propertius' *maxima... historia*, 'grand legend' of love (2.1.16), situates itself in relation to Virgil's great Roman epic and reminds us that the *Aeneid* embeds two erotic stories at its heart: that of Dido and Aeneas, and the battle between Aeneas and Turnus for marriage to Lavinia. At the end of book 12, for example, when Turnus cedes the duel as well as the war to Aeneas, he admits *tua est Lavinia coniunx*, 'Lavinia is your wife' (12.937). For Turnus, at least, the erotic is central to his struggle with Aeneas.²⁵

More pertinently to our concerns, by drawing attention to parallels between elegy inspired by Cynthia and Virgil's epic, 2.1 forces questions about the sources and creation of poetic authority. Propertius' *maxima... historia* is born *de nihilo*, 'from nothing' (2.1.16) and so epitomises the mysterious alchemy of poetry that can take the most quotidian of things ('whatever she has said, whatever she has done') and turn them into something with cultural status and artistic potency. The unspoken concern is with the question of how this authority is accrued by a text given that it is always created from nothing but the imagination and poetic skill of the writer. The *Aeneid*, being composed more or less contemporaneously with Propertius' elegiac books, is a particularly pressing case since it seems, from the evidence of 2.34, to have already achieved prominence and amassed a reputation: *maius... Iliade*, 'greater than the Iliad'

²⁴ *Ilias ipsa quid est aliud nisi adultera, de qua | inter amatorem pugna virumque fuit, Tristia* 2.371-2: quotation from Owen (1963), translation from Wheeler revised by Goold (1988).

²⁵ Quotations from the *Aeneid* are from Mynors (1969), translations from Fairclough revised by Goold (2000). In *Aeneid* 9, too, Turnus justifies the war by turning it into a struggle over a woman: *fero sceleratam exscindere gentem | coniuge praerepta; nec solos tangit Atridas | iste dolor, solisque licet capere arma Mycenis*, 'to cut down with the sword a guilty race that has robbed me of my bride! Not only the sons of Atreus are touched by that pang, not only Mycenae has the right to take up arms' (9.137-139).

(2.34.66).²⁶

The figure of a muse is thus a marker in what we might think of as a 'discourse of inspiration' that operates in these Roman texts to negotiate questions of literary practices and poetic authority.²⁷ The *Aeneid* invokes muses at various points in the text and it is worth examining the book 1 invocation briefly for the way in which it can illuminate what Cynthia is doing in her muse role in the Propertian text.²⁸ *Musa, mihi causas memora... tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* 'tell me, O Muse, the cause [of Juno's anger]... can fury so fierce dwell in heavenly breasts?' (1.8-11). The muse's overt role is that of a mediator between man and the gods but the invocation itself 'quotes' previous calls for inspiration so that her presence also bridges Greek and Roman literary culture, thus linking Virgil to his literary predecessors. The authority of this muse derives not just from her divine status within the mythic system of the text, but also from her intertextual condition.²⁹ By recalling other muses, such as those of Homer, the Virgilian text succeeds in appropriating the cultural respect and literary eminence of previous epic to itself.

Virgil's muse is asked not just to relate (*memora*) the story of Aeneas' travails driven by Juno's anger, but also to help us understand such a human and earthly emotion in a divine being: *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (1.11). She thus serves partially as an interpreter, intervening between story and meaning, and opens up the possibility that a muse could tell a story of her own. We will return to this notion presently in relation to Propertius 4.7 and Ovid's muses, but the important point for the moment is that the muse is part of a literary structure which is inherently intertextual, and that the sanction which she bestows derives from her previous incarnations within a constructed literary 'tradition'. Insofar as the power of the muse depends on her intertextuality

²⁶ Propertius' second book is usually dated to c.28-25 BCE, Virgil's *Aeneid* to c.30-19 BCE: see Goold (1990) on Propertius, Donatus' Life of Virgil in Ziolkowski & Putnam (2008) 181-199.

²⁷ Sharrock (2002a) 207.

²⁸ Later invocations come at *Aen.* 7.37 where Erato is called upon, and 9.525-8 where the muse is Calliope: see Todd (1931), Toll (1989) on Erato, Lowrie (2009) on Virgil's muses more generally.

²⁹ Sharrock (2002a) 208.

rather than her divinity, the muse can become human as in the case of Cynthia, and interrogate other issues of metaliterary import - such as who controls the narrative, and who gives it meaning.

In 2.1 Cynthia's Coan silks inspire *totum... volumen*, 'a whole book' (2.1.6), but they elicit quite a different response in 1.2.³⁰ In the book 1 poem, Cynthia's exotic dress and elaborate hair, the precise attributes which inspire the poet of 2.1, are castigated for being artificial, unnatural and indicative of a lack of chastity:

*quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo
et tenues Coa veste movere sinus
[...]
crede mihi, non ulla tuae est medicina figurae;
nudus Amor formae non amat artificem
1.2.1-2, 7-8*

What avails it, my love, to step out with coiffured hair and flutter the sheer folds of a Coan dress?... Believe me, there's no improving your appearance: Love is naked, and loves not beauty gained by artifice.

Cynthia's erotic ornamentation in 1.2 is represented as specifically 'foreign' (*peregrinis*): silks from the Greek island of Cos, Orontean perfumes from Antioch, implying that imported luxuries are antithetical to the 'Roman' virtues of chastity and naturalness.³¹ Yet the examples that the text goes on to give as female exemplars of virtuous chastity are all taken from Greek myth and art: Phoebe, Hilaira, Hippodamia. The text undermines its own purported ideology of Roman artlessness by using examples that are themselves taken from Greek myth. The literary language of this poem draws on other art forms, a stance at odds with its elevation and valorisation of artlessness. This irony is foregrounded when the chaste beauty of these mythic women is described as *qualis Apelleis est color in*

³⁰ See DeBrohun (1994) on the 'rhetoric of fashion' in Propertius, especially book 4. This discourse and the symbolic role of dress in elegy is picked up in chapter 4 in relation to Sulpicia's texts; see also below for Gosson's use of this trope.

³¹ On the gendered and political implications of elegiac luxury, see Bowditch (2006, 2012); on the concept of luxury more broadly in the Roman world, Dalby (2000). See Langlands (2006) on the lack of fit between the Roman idea of *pudicitia* and the Christianised notion of chastity.

tabulis, '[pure] as the hues in paintings by Apelles' (1.2.22) drawing attention to their status as constructed art objects.³² Cynthia, by covering herself in expensive clothes, only serves to conceal her naked beauty which the narrator would prefer to see displayed: *nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis*, 'preventing your figure from displaying its own true merits' (1.2.6), so that even the apparent chastity of rejecting artifice is itself articulated in the language of nudity.

The import of reading 1.2 in the light of 2.1 is the way in which the juxtaposition captures the instability of individual poetic responses to the same source, revealing a poetic inconsistency between these two texts. One reaction to Cynthia in her Coan silks is a moralising one that castigates eroticised luxury; the other is a delighted one which elevates the *puella* to the source of Iliadic poetry. Cynthia as a human muse thus serves as both a negative inspiration (1.2) and a positive one (2.1), and emphasises the role of the poet: not as mouthpiece for a divinely-sanctioned muse, but as a creative artist working from his imaginative response to the manifestations of the world around him. By drawing attention to the unstable production of poetry and its capricious responses to Cynthia as poetic source material, the Propertian text stresses its status as a human art rather than a divine one, putting the poet at the centre of the work and positioning literature as the product of skilled artistry.

A secondary concern is with the complex response of Roman poetry to prior Greek cultural models. On one hand, 1.2 evinces a purported desire not to follow the ornamental models of Greek poetry, and art more generally, which are implied to be 'foreign' to Roman ideas of unaffectedness and a lack of artifice. On the other, supposedly Roman ideals such as that of chastity in the text cannot be constructed without recourse to previous Greek paradigms. This cultural self-exploration and the struggle to negotiate and express a sense of a Roman poetic identity will return later in this chapter.

Propertius 1.2 is also a poem which puts forward the idea of Cynthia not as a muse or source of inspiration but as a poet in her own right: *cum tibi*

³² On Apelles as an archetype of the ancient artist, see e.g. Sharrock (1991).

praesertim Phoebus sua carmina donet | Aoniamque libens Calliopea lyram, ‘all the more since Phoebus endows you with his songs, and Calliope, nothing loth, with Aonia’s lyre’ (1.2.27-28).³³ ‘Propertius’ claims he loves her for her skills in singing, her playing of the lyre, her *iucundis... verbis*, ‘happy talk’ (29) but though her voice is referred to, it is suppressed within this poem. In 4.7, however, Cynthia speaks for herself, creating her own narrative when she returns, in macabre fashion, from the grave.³⁴

In some respects 4.7 is a re-visiting of, and response to, 1.19 in which the narrator foretells his own death and fears that Cynthia will abandon his funeral: ‘this fear is more cruel than the funeral rites themselves’ (*hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis*, 1.19.4). He claims that he will continue to love her beyond death and will always be known as *tua... imago*, ‘your shade’ (1.19.11).³⁵ In 4.7 the situation is reversed: it is Cynthia who is dead and it is her shade which haunts ‘Propertius’. In an inversion of 1.3 where the narrator steals into the bedroom to contemplate the sleeping Cynthia, Cynthia’s ghost now visits the narrator’s bed. The text carefully foregrounds the eerie contrast between Cynthia with her dress charred from the funeral pyre (*lateri vestis adusta fuit*, 4.7.8) and lips withered from drinking the waters of the Lethe (*Lethaeus triverat ora liquor*, 4.7.10), and the living voice (*spirantes*, 4.7.11) which emerges from her mouth and which gives her a greater speaking presence than in other poems when she was alive.

³³ In 1.3, too, Cynthia describes herself as beguiling her time by playing *et Orphea... lyrae*, ‘Orpheus’ lyre’, 1.3.42.

³⁴ On 4.7 see Muecke (1974), Yardley (1977, 1983), Warden (1980, 1996), Allison (1980b, 1984), Papanghelis (1987) 145-198, Janan (2001), DeBrohun (2003), Richardson (2006) 454-461, Heyworth (2007) 463-73. Petrarch imitates 4.7 in his *Triumph of Death* where Laura returns from the dead: see chapter 4.

³⁵ On death fantasies and tropes of erotic death in Propertius, see Warden (1980) 11-84, Papanghelis (1987), Allison (1980b), Yardley (1983), Houghton (2011). The macabre imagery of lovers embracing in a grave reappears in the Renaissance e.g. *mox sola tenebo: | mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa terram*, ‘soon I alone shall hold you: with me you will be, and my bones shall press yours in close entwining’ (4.7.93-94); ‘When my grave is broke up again | ... and he that digs it, spies | a bracelet of bright hair about the bone, | will he not let us alone, | and think that there a loving couple lies’, Donne, ‘The Relic’, 1, 5-8, quotation from Carey (1990, revised 2000), also Marvell’s inversion of this trope, ‘The grave’s a fine and private place | but none, I think, do there embrace’, *To His Coy Mistress*, 31-32, quotation from Kermode & Walker (1990).

As soon as she begins to speak Cynthia starts to contest the idea of 1.19 that it is she who would abandon the dead poet, turning the accusation back against him: "*perfide, nec cuiquam melior sperande puellae, | in te iam vires somnus habere potest?*", ' "Treacherous one, from whom no girl can expect better, can sleep so soon have power over you?"' (4.7.13-14). In 2.20 the narrator had sworn on the bones of his mother and father that he would remain faithful *ad extremas*, 'to my dying hour', and that his parents' ghosts would haunt him if he lied (2.20.15-18). Here Cynthia accuses him of an instant and easy forgetfulness and turns his own curse against him when she returns from death to trouble him.

The appropriation of her accusatory opening words from those spoken by the ghost of Patroclus to Achilles in *Iliad* 23 is clear: 'You sleep, Achilles; you have forgotten me; but you were not | careless of me when I lived, but only in death' (*Iliad*, 23.69-70).³⁶ The night visitation to a sleeping man also recalls Hector's ghost coming to the sleeping Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2 (2.268-2987), as well as the return of Creusa's shade later in the same book (2.771-794).³⁷ On these models, the Propertian narrator is figured as the epic hero – Achilles, Aeneas – while Cynthia plays the part of the dead and defeated Patroclus and Hector, and the *infelix*, 'wretched, unfortunate' (2.772) lost wife. *Infelix* also links Creusa to Dido as it is an epithet repeatedly associated with the queen: *uritur infelix Dido*, 'unhappy Dido burns' (4.68) when she first falls in love with Aeneas; and when Aeneas encounters her shade in the underworld his first words to her are '*infelix Dido*' (6.456).³⁸ Although the term is not attached to Cynthia in this poem, there are possible connections to be drawn between her and Dido: when she learns of Aeneas' plan to leave Carthage, Dido promises that her shade will follow and haunt him - Dido fails to enact her threat, but it is partially fulfilled on her behalf

³⁶ Warden (1980) 14-15, Flaschenreim (1998) 53.

³⁷ Wyke (2002) 26. The comparison between Hector and Cynthia is made closer in that he, too, bears the wounds of death: *raptatus bigis ut quondam, aterque cruento / pulvere perque pedes traiectus lora tumentis*, 'torn by the car, as once of old, and black with gory dust, his swollen feet pierced with thongs', *Aen.* 2.272-3.

³⁸ See also *Aen.* 4.450, 4.529, 4.596.

by Cynthia.³⁹

As was the case with Virgil's muse, Cynthia's shade - and, through her, Propertius' poem - becomes invested with literary authority derived from previous texts, specifically the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. The intertext is a layered one: Cynthia 'quotes' from the prior speeches of Patroclus, Hector and Dido, while her creator, Propertius, re-writes scenes from canonical Greek and, now, Roman epic. Cynthia's status as elegiac *puella* is overwritten, though never replaced, by the roles of epic hero, wife and lover, so that in this poem, at least, she is a complicated figure who channels and unites, temporarily, various characters and the sometimes contradictory values they encode.

As Cynthia's ghost continues to speak, she persists in dismantling the foundations upon which 'Propertius' fantasy of erotic love is built. She describes the way she used to climb secretly out of her window at night in order to be with 'Propertius', and their passionate nights spent making love outside at the crossroads (4.7.15-20). This is a quite different story from that which we have been told in the earlier three books: 'Propertius' version is that of the archetypal *dura puella*, 'an unrelenting girl' (2.1.78) who, 'iron-hearted... never said 'I love you' (*illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit 'amo'* 2.8.12). In other poems we have witnessed 'Propertius' easy entry into Cynthia's home at night (1.3), and have heard his numerous references to making love in her bed (1.3, 2.15). He has frequently declared his constancy and contrasted it with her lack of fidelity (1.19, 2.5, 2.9a, 3.24), and her very openness about other lovers (1.9, 2.5) has led to the critical ambiguity over whether Cynthia is a courtesan.⁴⁰

Now she, speaking for herself, claims constancy and represents herself as the abandoned lover: *foederis heu pacti, cuius fallacia verba / non audituri diripuerunt Noti*, 'alas for the troth you plighted, whose deceitful words the South Wind, unwilling to hear, has swept away' (4.7.21-22). Her use of *foederis* here is notable in relation to the Catullan texts discussed in the previous chapter,

³⁹ *Sequar atris ignibus absens / et, cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus, / omnibus umbra locis adero*, 'though far away, I will chase you with murky brands and when chill death has severed soul and body, everywhere my shade shall haunt you', *Aen.*4.384-6.

⁴⁰ e.g. Wyke (2002) 28, Fear (2000) more generally on images of prostitution and elegy.

supported by the notion of unreliable words as being 'written on the wind' as in Catullus 70. Cynthia, appropriating the role of 'Catullus', accuses 'Propertius' of the oath-breaking associated with Lesbia thus inverting the erotic gender dynamic upon which elegy is supposedly built.

Cynthia's voice is thus used within the text to contest not just the Propertian narrator's story but the 'master-narrative' of elegy itself. By refusing the trope of the *dura puella* and disputing the constancy of her lover, Cynthia unsettles the character and structure of elegiac love, and puts pressure on the contours that bound and define Propertian erotics. There is space, of course, within the narrative, not to believe her, but there have been earlier intimations of the narrator's infidelities (2.22, 3.20, 4.8), and Cynthia herself has declared her constancy in 1.3 and 2.29: "*me similem vestris moribus esse putas? / non ego tam facilis: sat erit mihi cognitus unus*", ' "do you think I am like you men in behaviour? I am not so fickle: enough for me to know one man"' (2.29b.32-3) - even if she does immediately undercut her own indignation somewhat by specifying that the one does not necessarily have to be 'Propertius': *vel tu, vel si quis verior esse potest*, 'yourself or somebody more faithful' (2.29b.34).⁴¹

Cynthia's voice thus clashes with that of 'Propertius' and enacts a struggle for control of the narrative as her story decentres and interrogates his. This interest in writing conflicting voices, frequently opposed through gender, and using them to draw attention to questions of narrative unity and authority underpins Ovid's *Heroides* which picks up on these issues and makes them the focal point of the later text.⁴² The competing voices of the *Aeneid*, too, are further evidence of an Augustan preoccupation with this dialogic mode of poetics: opposing textual voices serve as devices which mark out ideological and ethical systems, multiply meanings, complicate and enrich the texts which

⁴¹ For a different reading which sees Cynthia's accusations in 4.7 as 'all fictions of the nightmare', see Richardson (2006) 454.

⁴² The *Heroides* extends this interest by making the heroines writers: see Keith (2008) 30 on Propertius' book 4 as an 'inspiration' for Ovid; on voices, gender and writing more generally in the *Heroides*, Verducci (1985), Desmond (1993), Gordon (1997), Kennedy (2002), Lindheim (2003), Spentzou (2003), Fulkerson (2005).

contain them.⁴³

While Cynthia can be seen to contest the Propertian master-narrative, at the same time she uses 'Propertius' own narrative strategies: the extended mythical exemplars in lines 55-70, the engagement with the *Aeneid*, so that their voices blend and merge as much as they separate.⁴⁴ Cynthia's may be a contestatory voice but it is also a collaborative one: she both competes with the main narrative voice of 'Propertius' and yet is also aligned with it.

Cynthia's story in 4.7 is, of course, itself a partial re-telling of, and response to, *Aeneid* 6 and re-writes the religious and moral centre of that poem from a specifically gendered and eroticised position. Like Aeneas, Cynthia travels through the topography of the underworld and observes its inhabitants, but the images she brings back are very different from those of the *Aeneid*.⁴⁵ Most strikingly, Cynthia's underworld is peopled exclusively by women whom she divides into the good (Andromeda, Hypermnestra) and the bad (Clytemnestra, Pasiphaë), and who are located in the equivalents of Virgil's Elysium or Tartarus according to their sexual conduct (4.7.55-70).⁴⁶ Virgil, for comparison, places people in Tartarus for political crimes and crimes of power, such as the Titans who tried to overthrow the Olympians (*Aeneid* 6.580-1). When Cynthia meets Andromeda and Hypermnestra, she specifies that 'they tell their stories' (*narrant historias... suas*, 4.7.63-4). Hypermnestra also appears in *Heroides* 14, Hypermnestra to Lynceus.⁴⁷ Although the relationship between the Propertian and Ovidian texts is uncertain and the question of precedence unresolved, the

⁴³ Textual voices have been defined as 'devices... exploited to insinuate ramifying meanings and messages... Further voices intrude other material and opinions... add to, comment on, question and occasionally subvert': Lyne (1987) 2. On voices in the *Aeneid*, see also Parry (1963), Fowler (1990), Barchiesi (1994), Casali (1995), Perkell (1997), Dinter (2005), Behr (2005); Kallendorf (2007) explores early modern receptions of Virgilian voices.

⁴⁴ Janan (2001) disagrees, seeing Cynthia's voice as always sceptical and confrontational.

⁴⁵ On the underworld in 4.7, see Warden (1980) 38-50, Papanghelis (1987) 176-9, Richardson (2006) 454-61, Heyworth (2007) 463-73.

⁴⁶ Andromeda appears earlier in Propertius' own poems e.g. 1.3, see also *Met.* 4.670-739. The story of the Danaids is depicted on Pallas' belt which Turnus removes (*Aen.* 10.495-499) and which leads to his death at the hand of Aeneas (*Aen.* 12.938-949).

⁴⁷ Dating can be only provisional, but the *Heroides* is usually dated to c.25-16 BCE, with Propertius' fourth book to c.16 BCE: Showerman revised by Goold (2002) on the *Heroides*, Goold (1990) on Propertius.

existence of these elegiac texts concerned with mythic women speaking back to established narratives is evidence of a common interest in challenging canonicity.

By accusing 'Propertius' of infidelity and claiming sexual constancy for herself, Cynthia associates herself with the 'good' women of the underworld so that patriarchal codes become reinforced by a ventriloquised female voice. This reassertion of conventional Roman sexual values inverts the subversive moralities of Propertius' poetry and so temporarily aligns it with the moral register of Virgilian epic. Virgil, however, locates his Pasiphaë in the *Lugentes Campi*, 'the Mourning Fields', the place reserved for the victims of *durus amor*, 'stern love' (*Aeneid* 6.442) where Dido herself wanders.⁴⁸ Where Cynthia's underworld is split on gendered and moral lines, parts of Virgil's, as is the case with Pasiphaë, are more ambiguous, just as the precise nature of Dido's 'crime' which aligns her with Pasiphaë is left unvoiced.⁴⁹ Certainly the mourning fields seem to be on the outskirts of the underworld and quite separate from Tartarus where the wicked are punished (*Aeneid* 6.539-543). Cynthia's underworld, then, judges women more harshly than does Virgil's. Thus in 4.7 it is the female voice of the sometime muse who reasserts the conventional patriarchal morality which Propertian poetics partially and at least superficially eschew, so that Cynthia celebrates her submission and sexual constancy in the face of infidelity just as, elsewhere, the Propertian narrator does his own.

In *Aeneid* 6, Aeneas and the sibyl leave the underworld in problematic fashion via the ivory gate, the gate of *falsa... insomnia*, 'false dreams', rather than through the true gate of horn (*Aen.* 6.893-8).⁵⁰ Cynthia, in contrast, claims she has come through the *piis... portis*, the 'righteous gate', and that she is one

⁴⁸ It is not completely clear whether Virgil's place of mourning is a gendered location since Sychaeus, Dido's first husband, is there, though whether because he, too, has something to grieve for in Dido's love for Aeneas, or whether he is simply accompanying his wife is left unresolved: see *Aen.* 6.472-477.

⁴⁹ For a discussion on Dido's 'guilt', see Monti (1981), Rudd (1990).

⁵⁰ On the problem of the gates in the *Aeneid*, see Reed (1973), Austin (1977), Tarrant (1982), West (1990), Cockburn (1992), O'Hara (1996). On the gates of sleep in 4.7, Warden (1980) 58-9, Papanghelis (1987) 190.

of the *pia... somnia*, 'righteous dreams'. The deliberate repetition of *pius*, 'faithful, devout, religious, dutiful' draws further comparisons with Aeneas, as it is the epithet that is most consistently associated with him.⁵¹ Cynthia, by appropriating the language of the *Aeneid*, provides a partial commentary on that text. She draws attention to the enigmatic departure of Aeneas through the ivory gate and the questions that raises about the status of what he has seen and been told about the future of Rome. She also unsettles the meaning of *pious*: it is difficult to see how the same word can be applied to an elegiac *puella* and a Roman epic hero without the term becoming loose and unfixed.⁵² The *Aeneid* itself, of course, problematises the term in relation to Aeneas, particularly at the end of book 12 when Aeneas' refusal of clemency and brutal killing of Turnus decisively reject the 'Roman' values that Anchises proclaims in book 6.⁵³

Cynthia's shade requests that 'Propertius' burn his poems about her just as her body has been charred by the funeral fire, reiterating a correlation between female body and poetic text (4.7.77-78).⁵⁴ An extra-literary intertext also exists in the story that Virgil on his death-bed requested that the unfinished *Aeneid* be burnt, making Cynthia a bold proxy for Virgil himself.⁵⁵ She then goes on to dictate her own epitaph, a statement of permanence which replaces 'Propertius' words about her with her own: *hic sita tiburtina iacet aurea Cynthia terra: accessit ripae laus, Aniense, tuae*, 'here in Tibur's soil lies golden Cynthia: fresh glory, Anio, is added to thy banks' (4.7.85-86).⁵⁶ Here, again, Cynthia is following

⁵¹ e.g. *Aen.* 1.220, 1.305, 1.378, 4.393, 5.26.

⁵² Warden (1980) 58-9 reads Cynthia's use of the term as simply meaning sexually faithful but that erases the broader implications of the word and its meanings within a Virgilian context.

⁵³ *Hae tibi erunt artes, pacique imponere morem / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, 'these shall be your arts, to crown peace with law, to spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud', *Aen.* 6.852-3.

⁵⁴ Johnson (2009) 83.

⁵⁵ Ovid's *Tristia* 1.7.15-25, 4.10.61-2 alludes to this story, further evidence that it was familiar in Augustan Rome; it was transmitted in Donatus' *Life of Virgil* available in Ziolkowski & Putnam (2008) 181-199, the request to burn the *Aeneid* 185 (Latin), 193 (English). The *Life* was frequently appended to early modern editions of Virgil: see Kallendorf (1999, 2007a, 2007b), Wilson-Okamura (2010) 108-9.

⁵⁶ See Flaschenreim (1998) on Cynthia's epitaph though she seems perilously close to reading Cynthia as an authentic female voice, rather than as another persona adopted by the poet. See also Herrera (1999) on the use of epitaphs in Propertius, Erasmo (2008) on funeral ritual in Latin literature, Houghton (2011) on burial practice in Roman elegy.

Dido who also attempts to 'write' her own epitaph, and both fictional women strive to memorialise themselves in a way that is different from the way the texts in which they appear generally portray them: *urbem praeclaram statui, mea moenia vidi*, 'a noble city I have built; my own walls I have seen' (*Aeneid* 4.655). Cynthia appropriates something of epic heroism to herself (*laus*, 'glory') just as Dido claims she has completed a task that Aeneas has been set but not yet achieved.

So Cynthia in 4.7 takes on shifting roles within a system of poetic production and circulation. She is an early reader of, and commentator on, the *Aeneid* and foregrounds some of its fractures and inconsistencies. It is precisely these moments, highlighted by Cynthia, where the ideological systems at work in the text are shown to break down and the poem becomes imbued with its provocative density and richness. Cynthia is also a counterpart to Aeneas, as well as taking on some of the shades of other characters, notably Dido and, to a lesser extent, Creusa. In this sense, she becomes a participant in the *Aeneid*, albeit by creating an elegiac surrogate. When she asks that Propertius burn his poems about her, she signals her desire to 'be' Virgil, to move from being the subject of poetry to being a poet in her own right - and all that that implies in terms of having control over the narrative which contains her. By placing 4.7 with 2.1 we can see how Cynthia is moved from being a muse figure, a source of poetic inspiration, to something with greater agency, at least within the fictional boundaries of the Propertian narrative.

To frame these readings of Cynthia and to illuminate further what is at stake in her shifting metapoetic incarnations, it is worth turning to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Though it was written after Propertius, many of the questions with which we are concerned, especially issues of art and authority, are central to Ovid's epic and can help to make sense of what is happening in the Propertian text.⁵⁷ We will start by looking at what happens when Minerva visits the muses in

⁵⁷ On stories of art and artists in the *Metamorphoses*, see especially Lateiner (1984), Hinds (1987a), Johnson (1988), Anderson (1989), Harries (1990), Sharrock (1991), Cahoon (1996), Heath (1996), Hardie (1997, 2002), Zissos (1999), Papaioannou (2005).

Metamorphoses 5.⁵⁸

When Minerva arrives on Helicon, the muses are described as *doctas... sorores* (5.255), and it is worth remembering that *docta* is an epithet of Cynthia's (e.g. 1.7.11, 2.11.6, 2.13.11), prompting comparisons between them.⁵⁹ Minerva comments on how fortunate the muses are in having their home on Helicon and at this point one of the muses, who remains anonymous, designated simply as *una sororum* (5.268), intervenes. Firstly she implicates Minerva herself in the role of the muses: *in partem ventura chori Tritonia nostri*, 'you, Tritonia, who would so fitly join our band' (5.270), and then reveals that their fate is endangered, that they are no longer safe on Helicon (*tutae modo simus*, 'if only we were safe', 5.272), which is no longer the sanctuary that it once was. These muses are ill at ease in the world, and have become alienated from it: *vetitum est adeo sceleri nihil*, 'such is the licence of the time' (5.273).⁶⁰ The unnamed muse goes on to elaborate why *omnia terrent / virgineas mentes*, 'all things frighten our virgin souls' (5.273-4), and tells the story of Pyreneus, a king of Thrace, who intercepted the muses on their journey to Parnassus, offering them shelter from a storm - and we should note that these muses are inconvenienced by bad weather, not an idea associated with the dignified and grave muses of Homer or Virgil. When the rain had passed and the muses tried to leave *claudit sua tecta Pyreneus / vimque parat*, 'Pyreneus shut his doors, and offered us violence' (5.287-8). Given the emphasis on the virginity of the muses, and the framework of sexual violence which organises the *Metamorphoses*, the implication is that Pyreneus' violence is an attempt at rape. The muses escape but this short episode is instructive for the way in which it recalibrates ideas of the muses and what they represent as metaphors for inspiration and poetic practices.

Ovid's muses are vulnerable (to rain - as well as rape), and are no longer serene and impersonal. The muses themselves now have a story of their own to

⁵⁸ *Met.* 5.251-678. All Latin quotations from the *Metamorphoses* are from Tarrant (2004), translations from Miller, revised by Gould (1977). On this muse episode, see Johnson & Malamud (1988), Cahoon (1996), Zissos (1999).

⁵⁹ See James (2003) on the *docta puella* of elegy.

⁶⁰ More literally, 'truly no wickedness or crime has been forbidden'.

tell and this makes them partial, subjective and involved rather than disinterested. Their authority, previously represented as stemming, at least in part, from their detachment has been dissipated, and they are now shown to have an agenda of their own.

This story shows how the unnamed muse re-configures the authority of her narrative. With her divinity no longer unassailable, her words no longer carry the mandate of theocracy. Instead she is forced to re-locate the power of her story and she does this by relating it to her audience: Minerva, an Olympian, sister to Apollo, the patron of poetry, and a virgin goddess. By emphasising their common attributes - virginity, the way that Minerva herself could almost be one of the muses - the goddess is made partisan to the muse's story and, by extension, the fear that now haunts the muses: she, too, could be the object of sexualised violence.

Tales of pursuit, rape and other forms of eroticised brutality make up a significant portion, of course, of the *Metamorphoses*.⁶¹ The muse's story of intended violence might turn her into just another narrator in a text interwoven through narrative voices, compromising, even eradicating, her privileged status.⁶² The muse attempts to reclaim her previous prerogative by shaping her story to have special resonance to her prime audience: Minerva, the virgin patron of poetry.

The tale told to Minerva of the poetic competition between the muses and the Pierides, and the embedded story of the rape of Proserpina, extend these concerns. The daughters of Pierus challenge the authority of the muses and attack their tenure as the guarantors of poetry: "*desinite indoctum vana dulcedine vulgus / fallere*", ' "cease to deceive the unsophisticated rabble with your pretence of song"' (5.308-9). *Fallere* also means 'to beguile' so another way of reading this accusation is that the muses have been beguiling the unlearned (*indoctum*) with false sweetness (*dulcedine*) - telling people what they want to hear. The connection, again, between the reputation and authority of a text and

⁶¹ e.g. Richlin (1992b), Johnson (1996), Zissos (1999).

⁶² On narrators and narrative voices in the *Metamorphoses* e.g. Wheeler (1999), Barchiesi (2002).

audience reception is foregrounded. The contest is set up with Helicon itself as the prize and, significantly, the judges are the nymphs who live there (*electae iurant per flumina nympphae*, 'the nymphs were chosen judges and took oath by their streams', 5.316). So this is a compromised competition from the outset, and one which foregrounds the relationships between story, story-teller, audience and literary reputation.

The Pierides' song of the revolt against the Olympians is summarised dismissively in 12 lines (5.319-31), and the muse's abbreviated re-telling to Minerva puts the emphasis on the way in which it humiliates the Olympians who fled from battle and hid themselves in 'lying shapes' (*mentitis... figuris*, 5.326). Slyly slipped in amongst these shameful disguises is that of *soror Phoebi*, possibly Minerva herself, as a cat (5.330), a nice touch that must surely, as the muse intends, consolidate Minerva's prejudice against the Pierides whose narrative challenges Olympian status and power as surely as did the giants' revolt.

In contrast to this contingent and deliberately truncated version of the Pierides' story, the muse quotes her fellow muse Calliope's song of the rape of Proserpina verbatim (5.341-661). Included are two inset stories of Cyane and Arethusa, two water nymphs who courageously tried to prevent the abduction of the girl - figures who are bound to be prime objects of sympathy amongst the water nymphs who are judging the contest.⁶³ Calliope, and the unnamed muse who quotes her, shapes her narrative to her audience, inscribing her hearers within the text as a way of aligning their interests with those of the storyteller. Nymphs, as we know, are particularly vulnerable to rape in the *Metamorphoses* and so Calliope's tale is one which cannot fail to speak to the interests and potential fears of the judges of this contest. Similarly, it and the prior story of Pyreneus are especially appropriate to be told to Minerva, the virgin, female Olympian.

This episode has been read as an Ovidian engagement with questions of political patronage and literary censorship, not least because of the textual

⁶³ See Zissos (1999).

associations between the Olympians and the Augustan regime within the text.⁶⁴ Pyreneus' attempt to kidnap the muses suggests that poetry may be attacked, that external powers may try to curb and constrain it, appropriate it for their own usage. But in terms of our concerns here, it is also a story which deals with the way poetic authority, no longer under the divine benefaction of the archaic Greek muses, has to be re-negotiated and established afresh. For Ovid's muses, it is the audience who confers authority and sanctions a poetic text - here symbolised as the winning of a poetic contest and the retaining of Helicon. Poetic authority is represented as a function of reception, but the audience is never unbiased or dispassionate. The Pierides, in losing, become marginal voices whose song is almost wholly suppressed but which still maintains a presence at the boundary of what becomes, according to the judgement of the internal audience, an orthodox, 'winning' text. What is symbolised - and problematised - in this episode is the establishment of literary and cultural canonicity.

There is further insight to be gained from an analysis of the sibyl episode in *Aeneid* 6 and Ovid's brief poetic rejoinder in *Metamorphoses* 14.⁶⁵ The sibyl is described as *casta*, 'chaste, sacred, pure' (*Aeneid* 5.735) and her role is to lead Aeneas through the underworld to Elysium where he will meet Anchises. She is thus a mediator, conducting Aeneas to the place of prophecy although she is also a direct source of divination and foresight for him. In book 6, we are taken into the sibyl's cave (6.10) and witness her possession by Apollo. Especially disturbing is the violence of the encounter, her frenzied resistance, and the extent to which the god has to mute her own voice in order to bend her to his will: *tanto magis ille fatigat / os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo*, 'so much the more he tires her raving mouth, tames her wild heart, and moulds her by restraint' (6.79-80).

An important reading of this episode interprets the sibyl as a proxy for the

⁶⁴ e.g. *Met.* 1.173-6, 1.204-5; see Cahoon (1996), Zissos (1999); more generally, Barchiesi (1997).

⁶⁵ On the sibyl as a figure associated with poetry, the poet and inspiration, see Fowler (2002).

poet being possessed by the divine *furor* of inspiration.⁶⁶ In this model, the individual, personal voice of the poet is suppressed against his will as his words are pressed into shape by forces beyond him. This might also be read figuratively so that these forces may be understood to be not only the mysterious power of inspiration personified here by Apollo, but more widely those of genre and literary orthodoxy, of cultural obligations and political constraints. This is not necessarily a wholly negative transaction despite the violence of the sibyl-Apollo encounter in *Aeneid* 6. It is the sacrifice of the individual voice which gives the sibyl-poet access to something beyond: in the *Aeneid* it is a privileged contact with divinity and destiny.

So the sibyl in the *Aeneid* is imbued with authority as a seer through her submission to Apollo, and she has to suspend her own voice in order to channel his, the voice of divine and poetic power. Virgil's sibyl barely has a voice or history of her own outside of her prophetic and guide role, and the public and civic nature of her utterances is foregrounded in the text when Aeneas promises a temple to Apollo. This was built in 28 BCE on the Capitoline and housed the Sibylline books, so that the sibyl's prophecies in the poem match the Roman reality of Virgil's original readers.⁶⁷

Turning now to *Metamorphoses* 14, we can investigate how Ovid's sibyl episode speaks back to the *Aeneid*. Book 14 compresses much of *Aeneid* 6 into 18 lines (*Metamorphoses* 14.101-19) but at the end of this epitome, the narrative suddenly expands. As Aeneas is following the sibyl out of the underworld, he starts a conversation which prompts her to tell her own story. Like so many other tales narrated in the poem through female characters it is a narrative of pursuit

⁶⁶ Fowler (2002): echoes between the sibyl and the epic narrator support this e.g. she foresees *horrida bella* at 6.86, and the narrator says he will tell of *horrida bella* at 7.41. On the other hand, the brutality of the Apollo/sibyl episode is very different from the decorous and grave way in which the muse invocations are depicted, far more symbiotic than the rape-like encounter of the sibyl. The analogy between poet and sibyl seems to have been understood by later readers of Virgil: Dante's *Commedia* literalises the exchange when Virgil becomes 'Dante's' guide through the *Inferno*. Sharrock (2002a) offers a complementary though alternative model for the figuring of inspiration, suggesting Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 4.285-388) - both these readings approach this imagery of inspiration through gender and the potential emasculation of the (male) poet.

⁶⁷ Fairclough revised by Goold (1999) 511 n.1 & 2.

though not, in this case, of rape. Apollo courted her with gifts but when the sibyl requested a long life, she forgot to ask for eternal youth and is now aged and weary. Her description of the loss of physical presence reminds us of the vulnerability of the muses in book 4: *tempus erit, cum de tanto me corpora parvam / longa dies faciet, consumptaque membra senecta / ad minimum redigentur onus*, 'the time will come when the length of days will shrivel me from my full form to but a tiny thing, and my limbs, consumed by age, will shrink to a feather's weight' (*Met.* 14.147-9).

The sibyl's words can partly be read as evidence of the Callimachean influence in Ovidian poetry (*parva, minimum*) but also speak to the diminution of the divine authority of the sibyl as a literary figure. In the *Metamorphoses* she becomes, like the unnamed muse of book 4, another voice, another narrator in a text which is built from a plethora of voices, and hers has no special privilege or weight (*minimum... onus*).

So there are two things going on here: one is the dismantling of the established authority of the sibyl, a process which has implications for the status of the poet since neither can be unproblematically shored up by the conventional status of *vates* with access to divine inspiration. Yet the liberation of the sibyl from the governance of Apollo frees her to tell her own story, a story excluded from the *Aeneid* but which emerges in the *Metamorphoses* as a small, intimate moment of the personal, the usually marginalised, taking centre stage - if only briefly.

Ovid's sibyl can thus be read as a symbol for poetry which is self-interested and subjective; of a poet who cannot stand outside the text which she is creating or beyond the wider textual and literary system. A divine mandate has been dispensed with and the only authority that can take its place is a poetic one, one created by the potency of the text itself as superb poetry and splendid story-telling.

Taking these figures together - Cynthia as muse and poet, Virgil's sibyl, Ovid's muses and sibyl - provides evidence for the way in which Augustan poetry

is fascinated by questions of metapoetic import. These muse and sibyl figures operate as metaphors which enable questions about inspiration, the creative process, literary practices and reception to play out within and between these texts. Especially potent seem to be issues of canonicity and conformism as we see figures who are more usually somehow muted - Cynthia, the sibyl, even, in some ways, the muse - emerge as story-tellers in their own right. The invested relationships between poet, story and audience is especially foregrounded and raises questions about poetry's political valences and issues of censorship, the latter especially prevalent in the *Metamorphoses*.

Common factors to all these Augustan incarnations of metapoetic figures is the perceived inadequacy of, and move away from, previous embodiments of creativity and inspiration. The divinely-sanctioned muses of Hesiod and Homer can barely find a place in these Roman texts: they are threatened, imprisoned, almost violated and now fearful in *Metamorphoses* book 4, and in Propertius' texts have been replaced by the eroticised Cynthia. Even the *Aeneid*, which still has recourse to the 'traditional' muses, problematises the canonical representation of the poetic process in the unsettling scene between Apollo and the sibyl. Ovid's sibyl articulates her own decline and diminution as she lives through her designated thousand years, and his muses on Helicon find themselves at odds with the world they currently live in.

All of these texts reflect self-consciously on their own production, their status and their authority, and participate in a discourse acutely concerned with negotiating a sense of Roman poetic self-identity within Augustan culture. Propertius' Cynthia is an early indicator of this metaliterary turn in elegy but framing her representation as shifting between muse figure and poet with the *Aeneid* and the later *Metamorphoses* foregrounds the productive dialogue which may be initiated in Propertius but which continues beyond the classical period.

Especially notable is the way in which this dialogue manifests itself as a cross-genre phenomenon: rather than separating elegy and epic, it reveals their common literary concerns. Ovid's texts, which also refuse any easy

differentiation between genres, continue to concern themselves with questions of poetic inspiration and authority, and how texts might situate themselves in relation to a literary 'tradition'. These Roman texts seem to be preoccupied with how canonicity is produced and upheld, and the relationships between poetry and the culture which produces it. Most of all they exhibit an interest in situating themselves against archaic Greek models in order to foreground the inadequacy of, and move away from, divine and theocratic authority towards an alternative poetics. Cynthia as a human muse encodes the subjective, the compromised, and the individual voice which is able to relocate itself from the margins of a text to its centre.

2.2 '*Propertius rediit ad nos*': the transmission of the Propertian text to the Renaissance

Before turning to Sidney's reception of Propertius, it is helpful to have a sense of the re-discovery of the Propertian text and its presence in the sixteenth century. The Propertian text has been described as 'one of the worst transmitted' of classical Latin texts.⁶⁸ The two earliest extant manuscripts (A and N) have been traced to northern France in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. N found its way to Italy and was owned by Poggio Bracciolini: in a 1427 letter written to Niccolò Niccoli in Florence, Poggio asserts triumphantly, *Propertius rediit ad nos*, 'Propertius has returned to us'.⁶⁹ N appears to be the source for some of the fifteenth-century manuscript copies which circulated in Milan; and also, interestingly for our concerns, may have travelled to England with Poggio in the fifteenth century.⁷⁰

The manuscript designated A seems to have remained in France, found its way to Richard de Fournival, and is noted in the 1338 catalogue of the Sorbonne

⁶⁸ Heyworth (2007) vii. For details, Butrica (1984), summarised in Butrica (2006); see also Fedeli (2006).

⁶⁹ Quoted in Heyworth (2007) xxv. See Greenblatt (2011) 126-34 on Niccoli: the book overall traces Poggio's re-discovery of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

⁷⁰ Heyworth (2007) xxvi.

library.⁷¹ This is the manuscript that was copied by or for Petrarch in c.1333.⁷² At this point scholarly opinion diverges: Heyworth, following Butrica, asserts that Petrarch's manuscript was copied for Coluccio Salutati in c.1380; Fedeli more recently suggests that Salutati's copy descended separately from Petrarch's.⁷³ The relationship between these Propertian manuscripts is a complicated one and cannot be worked out precisely. What is important for us is that Petrarch owned an early copy of Propertius, and that many of the descendants from A and N contained not only Propertius but also Catullus and Tibullus.

P, probably descending from Petrarch's manuscript and copied in Florence c.1423, also contains Catullus, Tibullus, and Ovid's 'Epistula Sapphus'.⁷⁴ B, produced in Milan c.1460, contains Propertius and Tibullus.⁷⁵ Q, from southern Italy sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century, contains Catullus and Tibullus alongside Propertius, as do U and C.⁷⁶ Butrica speculates that Propertius and Tibullus, possibly with Catullus too, were transmitted in a single codex from late antiquity and were only separated in the Carolingian period, perhaps by Richard de Fournival.⁷⁷ This would be another reason why the *editio princeps* of 1472 published Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus in a single volume: the printed edition was drawing on the manuscript tradition in publishing the Latin love elegists together.

This joint transmission in both manuscript and print is important for our concerns here since it means that readers and imitators of Catullus, Propertius or Tibullus from about the fifteenth century onwards would have had access to all the extant elegists in one volume, apart from Ovid who has a separate transmission history.⁷⁸ As noted in the introduction, references to Propertius in England certainly exist, and Stockward's 1579 diatribe against the presence of

⁷¹ Heyworth (2007) xi, Garinelli (2013).

⁷² Butrica (1984) 30; Heyworth (2007) xi, Garinelli (2013).

⁷³ Butrica (1984) 30, Heyworth (2007) xii; Fedeli (2013) 4.

⁷⁴ Heyworth (2007) xv.

⁷⁵ Heyworth (2007) xv.

⁷⁶ U comes from Florence c.1465-70, C from Rome c.1470-1: Heyworth (2007) xv, xiv, xlviii.

⁷⁷ Butrica (1984) 30.

⁷⁸ See chapter 3 on the transmission of Ovid.

Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid and Propertius on the English humanist curriculum is evidence of their being read before this date by schoolboys. It also means that the Tudor receptions of Catullus discussed in the previous chapter serve as evidence for the presence of Tibullus, including the Sulpicia poems, and Propertius in England from at least the end of the fifteenth century. Philip Sidney's well-documented translation of Catullus' c.70, his re-writing of cc.2 and 3 as Stella's sparrow and dog, and the sequence of 'kiss' poems in *Astrophil and Stella* are thus not just evidence of Sidney's reading of Catullus, but also of his knowledge of Propertius.⁷⁹

Astrophil and Stella 74 serves as a re-voicing of the questions about poetic inspiration raised in Propertius 2.1 and also asserts, in different words, that 'my sweetheart herself creates the inspiration'. In this sonnet, Astrophil rejects the tradition of the classical muses: 'I never drank of Aganippe's well, | nor ever did in shade of Tempe sit; and muses scorn' (74.1-3).⁸⁰ The redundant geography of inspiration invokes revealing intertexts since Aganippe is a fountain of the muses on Mount Helicon and is specifically mentioned in the challenge of the Pierides in

⁷⁹ On Sidney's translation of c.70 see the Introduction; *Astrophil and Stella* 83 is addressed to Stella's sparrow who 'must needs with those lips billing be | and through those lips drink nectar from that tongue', 83.12-13; sonnet 59 complaining of Stella's attentions to her dog is a witty re-making of the Catullan sparrow poems: 'him that bosom clips, | that lap doth lap, nay lets, in spite of spite, | that sour-breathed mate taste of those sugared lips', 59.9-11. The *Astrophil and Stella* 'kiss' poems start with the Second Song, which also replays Propertius' 1.3 with Astrophil viewing the sleeping Stella before stealing a kiss and waking her to reproof, and continue through sonnets 73, 79-83, thus ending with the sparrow poem: see Cotter (1970b) on these 'baiser' poems. Other elegiac echoes can be read e.g. 'my mouth doth water, and my breast doth swell, | my tongue doth itch, my thoughts in labour be' (37.1-2) seems to situate itself in relation to *Cat.* 51, *lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus | flamma demanat*, 'my tongue falters, a subtle flame steals down through my limbs', 51.9-10; sonnet 20 shows Astrophil being ambushed by Cupid, which recalls Propertius 1.1, and the final sonnet, 108, has him 'bow down his head' to erotic despair, a reminder of 'Propertius' lowering his eyes and having his head trod beneath Cupid's feet, so that Sidney's sequence ends with a reminder of Propertius' beginning; Astrophil's 'I may, I must, I can, I will, I do | leave following that, which it is gain to miss' (47.10-11) replays 'Catullus' resolution to leave off his love in c.76 e.g. *difficilest longum subito deponere amorem. Difficilest, verum hoc qualubet efficias*, 'it is difficult suddenly to lay aside a long-cherished love. It is difficult; but you should accomplish it, one way or another', 76.13-14. More general elegiac echoes can be found in the tropes of 'bed as battlefield' and in sickness poems e.g. sonnet 98, 'Ah bed... the field where all my thoughts to war be trained', 98.1-2, and the sickness sonnets 101-102: Cahoon (1998) on bedroom battles, Yardley (1973) on sickness elegies.

⁸⁰ See also sonnet 3 on rejecting 'the sisters nine' (3.1), 15 on moving away from 'old Parnassus' (15.2) and 'poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes' (15.7).

Metamorphoses 5 looked at earlier where it is one of the prizes which will go to the victors: *vel cedite victae / fonte Medusaeo et Hyantea Aganippe*, 'if you are conquered, yield us Medusa's spring and Boetian Aganippe' (*Metamorphoses* 5.311-2). Tempe is a vale in Thessaly through which the river Peneus flows (*Metamorphoses* 1.568-73): as Peneus is the father of Daphne, it turns out to be the site of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne, and thus links Astrophil, via Petrarch's Laura, back to a founding myth of elegy.⁸¹ Astrophil goes on to deny any divine *furor* as the source of his verse: 'Some do I hear of poet's fury tell, | but (God wot) wot not what they mean by it' (74.5-6), and claims, in line with the opening sonnet, 'I am no pick-purse of another's wit' (74.8) - that *imitatio* is not, supposedly, the basis of his poetic practice. The irony of a poem which asserts its lack of imitation through poetic intertexts will be explored later in this chapter.

The next lines re-work the questions of the Propertian narrator in 2.1: 'How falls it then, that with so smooth an ease | my thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow | in verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?', 74.9-11.⁸² As 'Propertius' before him claimed Cynthia as his inspiration, Astrophil asserts 'Sure, thus it is: | my lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss', 74.13-14. As is the case with Propertius' Cynthia, Stella, as this chapter goes on to demonstrate, is a shifting literary figure: part muse, part text, part intended reader, part collaborative voice in the weaving of *Astrophil and Stella*.⁸³

The next section reads Sidney's engagement with Propertius in detail, framed by the provocative entrance of the muse in *Astrophil and Stella* 1. Sidney's reading and appropriation of Propertian elegy enables a metaliterary discourse but one different from that to be found in the Augustan poems we have looked at. Sidney's text, we will see, is concerned not so much with the

⁸¹ See Braden (1990) on Apollo/Daphne and Petrarch's sonnets.

⁸² Cf. 'You ask how it is that I compose love songs so often, how it is that my book sounds so soft upon the lips. It is not Calliope, not Apollo that puts these songs in my mind: my sweetheart herself creates the inspiration', *Prop.* 2.1.1-4.

⁸³ On Stella as a text to be interpreted, see sonnet 67, 'the fair text better try; | what blushing notes does thou in margin see?', 67.7-8; if Stella as reader is implicated in the 'best wits' (67.11) then she might be read as a version of Cynthia as *docta puella*, 'learned girl'; on Stella's collaborative voice see Fienberg (1985), Prendergast (1995, 1999).

negotiation of poetic authority but with questions about the moral status of poetry in sixteenth-century England.

2.3 'Loving in truth and fain in verse': Astrophil's subversive muse and the abuse of poetry: *Astrophil and Stella* 1

"Fool", said my muse to me; "look in thy heart and write": but what is in Astrophil's heart, and what is the central subject matter of his verse to be? Sonnet 8 tells us that 'Love, born in Greece, of late fled from his native place' (8.1) and goes on to show us Cupid taking refuge 'in Stella's joyful face' (8.8). Finding her 'most fair, most cold' (8.12), Cupid takes flight again 'to my close heart, where, while some firebrands he did lay | he burnt unawares his wings, and cannot fly away' (8.13-14). So erotic love is what resides in Astrophil's heart and is the ostensible subject of the sequence to come. It is a self-consciously literary love taking its origins from Greek erotic verse ('Love, born in Greece', 8.1) and coming to Sidney's England via other incarnations including those of elegy and Petrarch, the latter particularly flagged through that 'most fair, most cold' (8.12), the archetypal description of the Petrarchan lady.⁸⁴

The opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* might thus be read as a response to the programmatic statements of Propertius 1.1, Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 and Sulpicia's first poem ([*Tibullus*] 3.13) all of which merge love with writing, so that erotic desire is the instigator of the elegiac poetic project.⁸⁵ In Astrophil's case, while 'loving in truth', he would 'fain in verse', playing on the slippage between 'fain' (willingly, gladly), and 'feign', to fashion or form. Taking its etymology from the Latin *fungere*, to form or mould, feign in Sidney's time has

⁸⁴ Forster (1969); while elegiac women cannot be described as sexually cold, the trope of the *paraclausithyron*, the poem addressed to or outside the mistress's closed door, articulates an elegiac version of aloofness: see Yardley (1978), Nappa (2007b). Sulpicia's last poem ([*Tib.*] 3.18) offers another explanation for a *puella's* apparent reserve.

⁸⁵ Catullus 1 also contains a programmatic statement about the Callimachean nature of the text to follow which will be slender, polished, trifling (*lepidum, expolitur, nugas*, 1,2,4) but while it alerts us to the mode of writing, it does not merge writing with the erotic in the way that the opening poems of the later elegiac books do. See also Freccero (1987) on the metapoetics of Petrarch's *canzoniere*.

both the positive meaning to fashion or shape, but also a negative one which is to fashion fictively or deceptively, to invent or contrive, to dissemble or pretend.⁸⁶ From the outset, Astrophil's love project, and the poetry which conveys it, is caught in this tension between 'truth' and 'fain', between his poetry being a representation of true love ('loving in truth') or of it being a true representation of his love, and of that love being, possibly, a deceptive contrivance which is itself embodied through poetry.

'Fain in verse my love to show' (1.1) contains a further syntactical complexity since 'my love' can refer either to Astrophil's emotions, or to the beloved reader to whom he wants to convey his feelings, the Stella of the sequence. The feigning can thus either mean that the deception is applied to his emotions, that the verse is a pretence of love, or that it is aimed at deceiving the object of his love, Stella - or, indeed, both. From the first line of this opening sonnet we are caught in a hermeneutic impasse which centres on the problematics of poetry: that it may not be a true representation of an authentic and sincere love but an invented contrivance with the intent to deceive.

The sonnet continues to outline what is at stake for Astrophil in his writing of poetry:

That she (dear she) might take some pleasure of my pain;
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know;
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
1.2-4⁸⁷

By reading his verse, Astrophil anticipates, the married Stella may be induced to empathise with his plight, to pity him and bestow her 'grace' on the lovelorn poet. Grace here means Stella's favour, a privilege which Astrophil seeks for himself, and one which, as later sonnets elucidate, unequivocally means sexual

⁸⁶ *OED* I.1 on positive meanings, II.2-11 on negative. *Fingit* is the verb used in *Aeneid* 6.80 when Apollo fashions the sibyl to his use. Sinfield (1980) 37 also reads 'fain' as a way for Sidney to mark his adoption of Astrophil as a poetic persona.

⁸⁷ The parenthesis in line 2 may be read as a syntactical allusion to Propertius: see Wills (1996) 337 on parenthesis as allusion, on its prevalence in Augustan and Callimachean poetry, 337-41 on its use in Ovid and Propertius.

submission.⁸⁸ That Astrophil's desires and intentions are physical is made transparent in sonnets 52 ('Let Virtue have that Stella's self; yet thus, | that virtue but that body grant us'), 61, 62 on the tension between Stella's virtuous and Astrophil's physical love ('Dear, love me not, that you might love me more'), 63 ('I craved the thing which ever she denies') and, especially, the Second Song where Astrophil's frustration almost spills over into rape ('Her tongue waking still refuseth | giving frankly niggard 'no'; | now will I attempt to know | what 'no' her tongue sleeping useth'). 57 adds to this when it talks about Stella being 'pierced' by the sharpness of Astrophil's erotic laments. The sequence also makes clear that while Stella, though married, does fall in love with Astrophil (e.g. sonnets 66 where Stella's eyes 'guilty seemed of love', and 69 'For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine, | of her high heart giv'n me the monarchy'), he equates the fact that she will not consummate this love with ultimate failure.

So Astrophil's writing of poetry has a specific outcome in sight: the seduction and sexual possession of Stella. The overtly physical nature of his aspirations, and the problematic use of that term 'grace' in an explicitly sexual way gives this poem a discordant position in relation to sixteenth-century neo-Platonism and the orthodox Petrarchan poetics built on it. Petrarch's own sonnets to Laura are founded on what became commonly known as the 'ladder of love' where a desire for the physical beauty of the earthly sonnet lady leads to an ascent towards an appreciation of divine beauty, heavenly grace and ultimate spiritual goodness.⁸⁹ The tension of the *canzoniere* springs, in part, from the

⁸⁸ *OED* 'grace' II.6a favour, 8b privilege, sometimes undeserved; see also Fienberg (1985) 8 on grace here as a euphemism for sexual favour; Roche (1997) 199 on Astrophil's misappropriation of what is also a theological term; Heale (1998) on its association with the language of courtly service.

⁸⁹ Plato's articulation of love as an ascent from physical desire via knowledge to the highest perception of divine beauty appears in Diotima's speech in *The Symposium* 210a-212a. On knowledge of Plato via Augustine in Petrarch's Italy, see Jayne (1995) especially chapter 1. The complete manuscript of Plato's works, after it had been lost to the west, had been brought from Byzantium to Europe in 1423. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) started translating the complete works into Latin in 1459 under the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici, and published the first edition of *Platonis opera omnia*, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, in 1484. Ficino's commentaries on Plato were the first since antiquity and were so influential on the Renaissance understanding of Plato

conflict between the narrator's physical and spiritual desires, wryly recognised in 'Una candida cerva' when the narrator falls into the stream, but the neo-Platonic underpinning remains stable.⁹⁰ Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) also draws on Plato ('as it is defined of the wise men of olde time, Love is nothing else but a certain coveting to enjoy beautie', 303) and, in the speech of Pietro Bembo in book 4, offers an exposition of sixteenth-century neo-Platonism which is a suggestive context for the reading of *Astrophil and Stella*:⁹¹

And therefore who so thinketh in possessing the bodie
to enjoy Beautie, he is farre deceived, and is moved to it, not
with true knowledge by the choice of reason, but with false
opinion by the longing of sense... These kinde of lovers
therefore love most unluckily for... they never come by their
covetings... Yong men be wrapped in this sensual love
which is very rebel against reason... and when these youthfull
years bee gone and past, leave it off cleane, keeping aloofe
from this sensuall coveting as from the lowest step of the
stayres, by the which a man may ascend to true love.

The Book of the Courtier, 304-7

Castiglione's description of ardent male youth maps neatly onto the representation of Astrophil: ideas of deceit, the replacement of 'true knowledge' by 'false opinion', the privileging of sensual desire over reason, even the connection between youth and melancholy provide a productive frame for reading Astrophil's first sonnet. The notion of Astrophil's love as 'vain, oppressive and at odds with virtue', of Astrophil himself being a negative rather than a positive model of the lover are certainly not new.⁹² This chapter extends these previous readings by concentrating on Astrophil not so much as a lover but as a problematic poet of love, and considers how this re-focus allows the text to

that references to the dialogues were more likely to be to Ficino's interpretations of them than to the works themselves: on Ficino's Plato see Allen, Rees & Davis (2001); for Ficino's commentaries on Plato see Allen (2008); on Ficino's Platonic Academy see Field (2001).

⁹⁰ The Petrarchan narrator's fall re-appears in *Astrophil and Stella* 19: 'him that both | looks to the skies, and in a ditch doth fall' (19.10-11).

⁹¹ All quotations from Castiglione are from Thomas Hoby's 1561 English translation.

⁹² See Scanlon (1976) 66 on Astrophil as a 'mimesis of love's folly', Sinfield (1980) 28, also Roche (1997).

intervene in debates about the moral status of poetry itself.

So Astrophil, according to Castiglione's exposition, remains on the 'lowest step' of the 'stayres' or ladder of love, caught up solely in physical desire for Stella. As a poet Astrophil takes this ladder conceit and turns it into a travesty of neo-Platonism: 'pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know; | knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain' (1.3-4). Rather than guiding him to the 'true love' and 'true knowledge' of Castiglione, Astrophil's poetry leads Stella, he hopes, to the fallen 'grace' of adulterous consummation. The idiom and tropes of neo-Platonism are appropriated by Astrophil but only in a debased sense - and the writing and pleasurable reading of love poetry are shown to be central to this moral falling away from the spiritual elevation articulated in Castiglione. From his opening sonnet, the aim of Astrophil's poetry is shown to be corrupt.

We have already noticed the way Astrophil rejects *imitatio* as a mode of poetic production and can now posit a connection between the way in which the text is created and its deceitful aims. Astrophil scours previous poetry ('oft turning other's leaves', 1.7) for inspiration but what he is seeking are 'fit words to paint the blackest face of woe' (1.5). 'Paint', like feign, has positive meanings at this period and can mean 'to express', but it can also have the negative connotation to represent or portray in a false way.⁹³ So one way of reading this text is that Astrophil is searching for prior poetry to assist, reinforce, defend and authorise his own corrupt and sensual aims. Poetic production and morality become mapped onto each other, so that Astrophil's rejection of imitative orthodoxy both symbolises and reflects his ethical failures in striving to put poetry to debased use as a tool of temptation and seduction.

Past poetry defies Astrophil's quest, even attempts to block his pursuit of immorality: 'other's feet still seemed but strangers in my way' (1.11). But swollen with desire, 'thus great with child to speak' (1.12), Astrophil refuses to be

⁹³ OED 'paint' 1.4b on negative usages available at this time.

diverted from his course.⁹⁴ And so it is his wayward muse who acts as midwife, bringing his corrupt poetics to birth: “look in thy heart and write”.⁹⁵

Astrophil’s muse and his rejection of *imitatio* as a productive route to poetry have been read positively as indicators of ‘an aesthetics for originality’.⁹⁶ But while the poem strikes a pose of - or feigns - innovation and inventiveness, it remains shaped by, and embedded within, literary conventions. As we have seen, in thematising its own status as poetry, it follows programmatic classical poems including those of elegy. The sonnet form is itself a gesture towards its Petrarchan inheritance, and the structure of a sonnet sequence, the first in English, further asserts its relation to Petrarch.⁹⁷ The ladder conceit of lines 3-4 owes a debt to neo-Platonism generally but also to Castiglione, and is itself based on *gradatio*, a standard trope of rhetoric.⁹⁸ For all Astrophil’s striving, and however much his muse might seem to endorse the idea of emotional authenticity, spontaneity, originality and artlessness, this is a complex and sophisticated text in which more seems to be happening than Astrophil is perhaps aware. It is in the space between Astrophil’s understanding and the reader’s that the virtuosity of the poem lies.

To contextualise the moral concerns which surrounded poetry at this time and which inform *Astrophil and Stella*, it is helpful to turn to Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy*. Dating Sidney’s texts is problematic but the *Defence* can be dated to after December 1579, and may have overlapped with the writing of *Astrophil and Stella*.⁹⁹ Probably written in response to Stephen Gosson’s *Schoole of Abuse*, an anti-poetic treatise dedicated to Sidney, the very existence of the *Defence*, which

⁹⁴ On pregnancy as a metaphor for creativity see Maus (1993), Ruvoldt (2004) 65-89.

⁹⁵ *Nascitur*, as we have seen, is the term used by Propertius of both his own elegies and the *Aeneid* thus setting a precedent for this imagery of poems being born.

⁹⁶ Prendergast (1995) 20: in this reading Astrophil represents poetic originality, *Stella* convention which overlaps to some extent with the schematics used in this chapter; Prendergast, however, reads Sidney as approving of Astrophil’s poetics. See also Quint (1983) on Renaissance concerns with how to reconcile ‘counterfeit’ or man-made fictions with the humanist valorisation of human creativity.

⁹⁷ Duncan-Jones (1989, revised 2002) 357 on *Astrophil* as the first sonnet sequence in English.

⁹⁸ Davis (2011).

⁹⁹ Duncan-Jones (1989, revised 2002) 371; all quotations from the *Defence* are from this edition. On the *Defence*, McIntyre (1962), Barnes (1972), Marotti (1999), on the relationship between the *Defence* and *Astrophil and Stella*, Wiener (1974), Sinfield (1980).

takes the form of a forensic speech with Poetry being on trial, is a testament to the 'uncertain value of poetry' in this period.¹⁰⁰ William Tyndale, for example, in *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (1530) calls the poet (in a generalising sense) 'the natural son of the father of all lies', so that the very term 'poet' might be used as a term of abuse.¹⁰¹

In the *Defence*, the narrator rehearses 'the most important imputations laid to the poor poets' (905-6). These are that poetry is a waste of time, that it is 'the mother of lies' (908), and that it is 'the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires; with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies' (909-10). Already we can see points of congruence emerging between Astrophil's poetics and cultural attacks on poetry by 'poet-haters'.¹⁰² Astrophil's deception and feigning, his 'pestilent desires' and his attempt to use poetry to tempt Stella from chastity are shown to imbue the sequence with precisely the facets of poetry that detractors used to attack it: Astrophil's verse corroborates rather than contests the criticisms laid against poetry.

The *Defence* goes on to argue that poetry can, and should, be a means to virtue: 'the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey longing, can be capable of' (296-8). All poets, the narrator claims, seek 'to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying of his own divine essence' (306-8). Astrophil, however, remains to the end of the sequence mired in his 'clayey longing', never escaping or transcending the desires of his body. The 'knowledge' that the virtuous poet attains and uses to raise himself towards the spiritual, becomes, in Astrophil's hand, Stella's knowledge of his own sexual desires and frustrations which, he hopes, will lead to the granting of the sexual favours he is pursuing. The *Defence* acknowledges the difficulty of achieving the status of a true and, implicitly, virtuous poet: 'by few men that art can be

¹⁰⁰ On Sidney and Gosson, Kinney (1972), Metz (2000) 60, Lehnhof (2008), Williams (2009); on anti-poetic treatises, see Metz (2000) quotation from 17, Herman (2009).

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Herman (2009) 13-15.

¹⁰² *Defence* 845.

accomplished' (451-2). In *Astrophil* the opposite has been created, the corrupt poet, seeking not spiritual virtue but sexual gratification.

Before returning to *Astrophil and Stella*, it is worth looking at Gosson's text for the light that it, too, sheds on the dynamics at work in the sonnet sequence. *The Schoole of Abuse* is described by Gosson as 'a plesaunt invective against poets'.¹⁰³ In it Gosson argues that 'amarous Poets... discover theyr shame, discredit them selves, and disperse their poyson thorough all the worlde' (1). That this 'poyson' is specifically sexual in nature is made clear in his readings of Virgil and Ovid that immediately follow this opening statement: 'the one shewes his art in the lust of Dido, the other his cunning in the incest of Myrrha, and that trumpet of Baudrie, the Craft of Love' (2).¹⁰⁴ Beneath the surface wit of the poets lie, he contends, 'vanitie... wantonesse... follie' (2), where wit is like 'chaste Matrons apparel on common Curtesans' (2).¹⁰⁵ The unwary reader risks being seduced by poetry which is not just likened to a prostitute but also to the cups of Circe which 'turne reasonable Creatures into brute Beastes' (2), and the golden apples which diverted Atalanta from chastity and the path of virtue to sinful lust (2). Gosson, it should be said, shows no apparent sense of irony in using classical myth and literature to castigate poetry.

To ensure that no-one can misunderstand a message couched in such literary terms, Gosson clarifies that poetry is 'the blocks of the Divil that are cast in our wayes' (2). In order to authorise his argument against poetry, Gosson calls on Plato: 'no marveyle though Plato shut them out of his Schoole, and banished them quite from his common wealth, as effeminate writers, unprofitable members, and utter enimies to vertue' (2-3).¹⁰⁶ Plato is supplemented by 'Tullie' (Cicero) who 'accompted them the fathers of lyes, Pipes of vanitie, and Schooles

¹⁰³ Quotations are by page number from the 1579 edition to which Sidney was most probably responding: STC 12097.5, accessed via Early English Books Online.

¹⁰⁴ The references are to *Aeneid* 4, *Metamorphoses* 10, and the *Ars Amatoria*.

¹⁰⁵ See above on the rhetoric of dress in elegy, and chapter 4 in relation to Sulpicia and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.

¹⁰⁶ See Plato's *Republic* 37-39a; Emlyn-Jones & Preedy (2013).

of Abuse' (3).¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting here the association between poetry, effeminacy, lack of virtue and civic failure since these exact faults are demonstrated by Astrophil in the sonnet sequence. Poems 18 and 21 show the moral lassitude brought on by Astrophil's desire; 30 centres on his abandonment of political and civic interests, and 53 on his social shame; 47 foregrounds his fall into erotic slavery, an effeminising position, and 49 emphasises this with its image of Astrophil as a horse being ridden by Love.

Gosson employs an inverted 'ladder' conceit which itself speaks back to Castiglione and neo-Platonists when he traces the movement from poetry to an ultimate state of sin: 'from Pyping to playing, from play to pleasure, from pleasure to slouth, from slouth too sleepe, from sleepe to sinne, from sinne to death, from death to the devill' (6-7). Astrophil, possibly following Gosson, does not challenge his representation but fulfils it: he is a figure for the 'amarous' and 'wanton' poets that Gosson denounces, who use the allurements of poetry in order to seduce their readers.

So *Astrophil and Stella* 1 stages a complex intervention in debates about the moral status of poetry. Astrophil, the poet within the narrative, is not represented as the ideal poetry-maker of the *Defence*, one who writes to 'teach and delight' (222), at least, not in any simple way. Instead, he is constructed to embody the faults culturally attributed, at least partially, to poetry: his verse is deceptive, designed only to seduce its readers, the foremost of whom is Stella, and to tempt her from chastity to sexual sin. Astrophil's rejection of *imitatio* and move away from an orthodox poetics is also a step towards moral bankruptcy so that the mode of poetic production is itself calibrated on an ethical scale. Astrophil's pursuit of originality and his move towards apparent emotional authenticity, sanctioned by his muse, is shown to be a paradoxical fall back into the common faults attributable, by its detractors, to poetry. His failure to live up to the ideal role of the poet offered by the *Defence* - to teach and delight - is

¹⁰⁷ The Cicero reference is obscure especially as Cicero himself wrote poetry; no poems of an erotic variety have survived, but Pliny refers to an erotic epigram Cicero wrote to his ex-slave Tiro: see letter 7.4.

instead turned into a negative exemplar - Astrophil is the illustration of a poet whose example we are not to follow.

But what of Stella? She is quite separate from the muse of the opening sonnet, and is instead positioned as the intended reader of the poetry. But at other points in the sequence she is shown to shift between reader, source of inspiration and, eventually, as a speaking voice, even a poet, in her own right.¹⁰⁸ Like Cynthia, she is an unstable figure, alternatively complicit with, and oppositional to, the main poetic voice of Astrophil. In exploring the various roles allocated to Stella, we can investigate how she is made to work within the sequence, and assess the implications of her emerging voice for the metapoetic discourse we are tracing.

In many of the early poems, Stella is the archetypically objectified mistress. Especially characteristic is the extravagant blazon of sonnet 9 where she is described through an extended - and poetically stretched - architectural metaphor.¹⁰⁹ Astrophil who claims in sonnet 3 that he will not follow those who 'cry on the muses nine' (3.1), or 'Pindar's apes' (3.3), or even those who 'with strange similes enrich each line' (3.7), falls definitively into the latter category as he describes Stella's face as 'Queen Virtue's court' (9.1), her mouth as a 'door' of 'red porphyry' (9.5-6), and her cheeks as 'porches rich' (9.7). This sonnet, like the other blazon poems, refuses all subjectivity to Stella, turning her into no more than an ornamental artefact, an opportunity for Astrophil to display his own poetic wit.

In other poems Stella is a muse figure and a source of poetic inspiration.¹¹⁰ The First Song blends these versions of Stella so that she is part muse, part reader or listener, and part poetic material as she is blazoned at length. Sonnet 67 makes her into a text which Astrophil strives to first read, 'look on again, the fair text better try; | what blushing notes dost thou in margin see?' (67.7-8), and

¹⁰⁸ See especially Fienberg (1985) on the 'emergence' of Stella.

¹⁰⁹ For other blazon poems, see e.g. sonnets 7, 12, 29, 37. Weiner (1974) divides the sequence into 5 movements, starting at sonnets 1, 20, 45, 69, and the Eighth Song: Stella, however, and her shifting roles do not fit neatly into this division.

¹¹⁰ e.g. sonnets 15, 50, 55.

then, in hope, to deliberately misread: 'I am resolved thy error to maintain, | rather than by more truth to get more pain' (67.13-14). Sonnet 45 shows us Stella as a potential reader of Astrophil as text: 'then think, my dear, that you in me do read | of lover's ruin some sad tragedy: | I am not I, pity the tale of me' (45.12-14). This mini sequence culminates in sonnets 57 and 58 where Stella is shown not just reading Astrophil's poems but reading them aloud to him in 58 ('the anatomy of all my woes I wrate | Stella's sweet breath the same to me did read', 58.11-12), and putting them to song in 57: 'she heard my complaints and did not only hear, | but them (so sweet she is) most sweetly sing' (57.9-10). In the Third Song she sings again and is likened to Orpheus.¹¹¹ In all these poems we learn that Stella reads and sings but we do not hear her voice for ourselves. The first instance of direct speech from Stella is in the Fourth Song.¹¹²

The Fourth Song is set during an assignation at night between Astrophil and Stella. The previous two sonnets, 84 and 85, sketch in a narrative which brings Astrophil to the house of Stella's mother where she is staying.¹¹³ The scene is set, tantalisingly, in Stella's bedchamber ('Your fair mother is abed, | candles out and curtains spread; | she thinks you do letters write', 37-39), and Astrophil makes pointed reference to the bed and its covering: 'these sweet flowers on fine bed too' (15). We cannot tell whether Stella is complicit in this secret meeting or whether Astrophil has crept unasked to her room, 'only joy, now here you are' (1), but his intent is unmistakeable: 'let my whispering voice obtain | sweet reward for sharpest pain' (3-4). Of the nine stanzas of the poem,

¹¹¹ See Prendergast (1995).

¹¹² On the Songs, see Cotter (1970), Almas (1993).

¹¹³ 'Highway... bear onward blessed me | to her', 85.1, 5-6; this 'highway', we learn, 'hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss', 85.14, presumably then leads to Stella's ancestral home. 85 has Astrophil arriving: 'I see the house; my heart, thy self contain', 85.1. Previous sonnets, 24 and 37, indicate that Stella is married: 'but that rich fool, who by blind fortune's lot | the richest gem of love and life enjoys', 24.9-10, and 37.14 where Stella 'hath no misfortune, but that Rich she is': these references are the basis of biographical readings of Stella as Penelope Devereux, later Penelope Rich, once spoken of as a possible wife for Sidney. Her mother, Lettice Devereux, married Robert Dudley, Sidney's uncle, thus bringing Penelope into the extended Sidney family: see Hulse (1986), Duncan-Jones (1991) 198-200. Sonnet 28 teasingly challenges biographical readings when Astrophil asserts 'When I say 'Stella', I do mean the same', 28.5. As in chapter 1, the readings here are based on both Astrophil and Stella as constructed characters within a literary narrative.

the first eight end in the same refrain: 'take me to thee and thee to me', and Stella's constant answer is 'no, no, no, no, my dear, let be'.

On the narrative level, this song enacts the conflict between physical desire and virtuous love which informs the sequence. Stella, by this stage, has made her love for Astrophil clear and yet she will not succumb to his seductive appeals and surrender her chastity.¹¹⁴ As Astrophil touches her, she pushes him away ('Sweet, alas, why strive you thus? | Concord better fitteth us. | Leave to Mars the force of hands', 43-46), until even Astrophil realises that she cannot be overcome: 'cursed be my destinies all, | that brought me so high, to fall', (51-52).

Re-writing the Biblical Fall, Astrophil's 'fall' is into unwanted virtue rather than sin, and his expulsion is from Stella's bedroom, the site of his fantasies of a sexual Eden. His 'Eve' is not a tempter but the protector of the moralities which underpin this sequence. The Fifth Song, too, shows us an Astrophil who strives to undermine Stella's moral standing within the text by likening her to 'a devil, though clothed in angel's shining; | for thy face tempts my soul to leave heaven for thee' (81-82). Astrophil's inversion of the Genesis story may be read as being sanctioned by the subversive muse of the opening sonnet who privileges the debased desires of his heart.

Astrophil's tainted re-writing of the Eden story leads us back to a comparison between his poetry and the power of the poet as depicted in the *Defence*: 'freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit' (181-2) he can create a better world than Nature: 'her [Nature's] world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' (188). Readers and writers in Sidney's time had inherited a medieval equation between a classical golden world and the biblical Eden, so that it is partly an ideal of lost perfection. At the same time, accounts of the New World figured America, in particular, as a golden world both literally in terms of material wealth as well as sexually, 'in which no laws governed male sexual

¹¹⁴ Hull (1996) claims that adultery in Sidney's circle would not have been regarded as shocking and reads this view back into the sonnet sequence; Sanchez (2013) disputes the chastity of Stella and goes so far as to describe her desire as 'promiscuity'.

appetite, and nudity and sexual license prevailed'.¹¹⁵ Astrophil's fantasies of an Eden in Stella's bedchamber with its 'sweet flowers on fine bed' (15) is clearly inflected by the latter accounts. Through his poetry he strives to recreate another Edenic golden world, but one filled only with sexual pleasure and erotic delight.

Within the context of the *Defence*, the poet's power is positioned as an overwhelmingly positive one, one which has the ability to draw human nature up from its 'clayey longings' (297) to 'as high a perfection as our degenerate souls... can be capable of' (296-8). But the *Defence* also foregrounds through this creation of a poetic golden world what is so disquieting about poetry to Renaissance thinkers: its capacity to be hubristic, to invert the natural order, to transform man into a god, and create a duplicate, counterfeit and false world. The danger is that poetry in the hands of a debased poet like Astrophil, whose only purpose is seduction and the sating of his sexual desires, has the power to corrupt rather than to uplift. Astrophil's re-writing of Stella as Eve, her bedchamber as Eden, and his own fall from the nearness of erotic satisfaction, illuminates exactly the threat of poetry, and the source of the anxiety it engenders about its right use which can be seen in Gosson's anti-poetic treatise as well as the *Defence*.

So in terms of the literary discourse which permeates the sequence, the Fourth Song is an important poem since it embodies sixteenth-century anxieties about the mis-use of poetry. It also performs the conflict between Petrarchan and neo-Platonic conventions and Astrophil's attempt to surmount them. His incursion into Stella's bedroom at night, his sexual insistence, his physical pressure on her, all speak to the overturning of conventional sixteenth-century

¹¹⁵ On the myth of the golden age in the Renaissance see Levin (1969); on the association between the New World and a golden world see Cunnar (1993), quotation from 186; also Hester (1987) on Donne's equation between America and an eroticised Edenic world. Both Hakluyt and Raleigh who wrote of their voyages to the New World were at Oxford with Sidney: see Duncan-Jones (1991) 42. There is a long literary pedigree of the golden age in classical literature from Hesiod forwards: one of the most complex is that of Virgil in the *Aeneid* where, within the complex chronology of the poem, it is a lost perfect past mourned by Evander (8.324-5), a mythical future prophesied by Anchises and an imperial present under the aegis of Augustus (6.791-3): see Wallace-Hadrill (1982), Barker (1996), Perkill (2002).

literary erotics, an attempt, perhaps, to return to the underlying sexual mores of elegy which had been sanitised by Petrarch, but which re-emerge in Wyatt's poetry and, as we will see in the next chapter, that of Donne. In this struggle, it is Stella who safeguards Petrarchan and neo-Platonic virtue and morality, who keeps the sequence in order with her 'no, no, no, no' which closes each stanza. If Astrophil is the 'wanton', 'degenerate' poet of both Gosson and the *Defence*, then Stella is the moral exemplar and, perhaps, even the true poet conjured up by the *Defence*. Her role is that of both moral guardian and also defender of a mode of poetics which Astrophil strives to over-reach.

Importantly, too, Stella becomes a collaborative poetic voice which sustains this poem. The six-line stanzas which make up the song are built on four lines of Astrophil's persuasion, followed by his reiterated plea: 'take me to thee and thee to me'. Each stanza is then capped and closed by Stella's refusal, 'no, no, no, no, my dear, let be'. That final rhyming couplet repeated nine times is thus dependant on the combined voices of Astrophil and Stella, and the stanza would itself be incomplete without Stella's voice. Her following of his simple monosyllabic diction and metre mark Stella's complicity in this song, even while her refusal to accede to Astrophil's erotic demands demonstrates her rejection of the matter of his poetry. In contesting the contents while completing the form of the poem, Stella serves to displace, albeit in a minor way, the subversive muse of the opening sonnet, and presides over a poetic dialogue which merges narrative with metapoetic discourse.

The Fourth Song is an indicator of the emergence of Stella from source of inspiration, text and reader, to collaborative poetic voice. The Eleventh Song, the last song of the sequence and situated four sonnets from the end, shows an expansion of her role. In this poem Stella is no longer merely the respondent and her words are not confined to a single refrain. Also built on nine stanzas, this last song starts each stanza with Stella speaking in two lines, and then allows Astrophil to reply in three. The dynamic between the speakers is reversed as Stella interrogates or poses a question, and Astrophil responds. The rhyme

scheme links their words, but now it is Stella who sets the precedent and Astrophil who follows after.

This is, in effect, Stella's farewell poem ('Come no more, lest I get anger', 37; 'well, be gone, be gone, I say', 41) and while in the narrative an emotional stalemate has been reached, the literary implication is that once Stella has achieved the status of poet in her own right, her function can be extended no further and she disappears from the text. The two sonnets which follow re-confirm her physical absence though she still, of course, haunts Astrophil's sonnets: 'unhappy sight, and hath she vanished by', (105.1), 'o absent presence, Stella is not here', (106.1). Within the story of the sequence, by the Eleventh Song Stella has admitted her love for Astrophil but will not compromise her chastity: her farewell is a sad one for both of them, though the song ends on a note of bathos as Astrophil has 'from louts to run away' (45).

Nevertheless, there is a moment within this song which indicates some moral development on the part of Astrophil. In stanza five, Stella tries to console Astrophil by telling him he will get over her loss and attach himself to other women, an idea which he rejects: 'I will think they pictures be, | image-like of saint's perfection, | poorly counterfeiting thee', (23-25). When she tells him that his reason should lead him away from such thinking, he counters: 'Dear, do reason no such spite; | never doth thy beauty flourish | more than in my reason's sight', (28-30). Recalling Castiglione, we remember that sensual love, epitomised throughout this sequence by Astrophil, is opposed to reason ('yong men be wrapped in this sensual love, which is very rebel against reason', 305). Now Astrophil is perceiving and appreciating Stella through his reason, not just as a physical beauty but as a moral one. Her emergence as a poet and a presiding deity over this song allows Astrophil to gain some ethical and philosophical insight which supersedes his sexually acquisitive nature most usually foregrounded throughout the sequence.

This moment is, however, ephemeral. Stella retreats into silence and is heard no more in the final four sonnets, and Astrophil in 105 deems himself 'not

in fault' (6) and 'guiltless' (10) in his love. And yet, there is a darker, more despairing note as the sequence ends with at least some intimations of Astrophil's possible maturing: 'that in my woes for thee thou art my joy, | and in my joys for thee my only annoy' (108.13-14).

Stella's emergence takes place not in the sonnets but in the songs, those points in the sequence which are interspersed between the overriding Petrarchan structure, thus liberating Stella's voice from the confining fourteen-line sonnet form and the muted nature of Laura. Laura, we should note, takes over from the voice of 'Petrarch' not in his sonnet sequence but in the *Triumph of Death*, a poem translated by Mary Sidney which we will look at in chapter 4. When she speaks, Stella contests the anti-poetic arguments made by Gosson and personified by Astrophil. In her chastity, she represents a virtuous, constant morality which, towards the end of the sequence, is given equality with, perhaps even dominance over, the more questionable ethics - and poetics - of Astrophil. Stella's voice recuperates and compensates for that of Astrophil and becomes the moral guardian not just of this sequence but of poetry more generally. The female gendering of the muses and sibyl predetermine the metapoetic valence of female characters and voices, and protect a space within poetry which allows them to speak - even if only as ventriloquised personas of male poets. Chapter 4 returns to this issue and considers how these prior incarnations of female poetic voices might open up certain modes of writing to female authorship, specifically by Sulpicia and Mary Sidney.

So *Astrophil and Stella* is a complex, sophisticated sequence that merges a compelling narrative and poetic virtuosity with a deeper engagement with the moral status of poetry itself. By reading it in relation to Propertius we can identify a preoccupation with writing and poetry, a discourse marked through the wayward muse of the opening sonnet and continued via Stella who, like Cynthia, shifts between muse, text, reader and poet. The struggle between Astrophil and Stella partly draws on that between 'Propertius' and Cynthia with both female figures emerging as creators of their own texts towards the end of

the work, but the deeper substance of that dialogue differs, shaped by the varying literary concerns and anxieties of Augustan Rome and late sixteenth-century England. The Propertian text, in dialogue with the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*, is interested in questions about the authoritative status of poetry, the *Astrophil and Stella* with its moral condition. Both sets of texts are, though, alive to questions of self-identity, with what it means to be a poet in Augustan Rome, and in Elizabethan England.

Sidney's Propertius can thus be read as certainly an erotic poet, but not one easily categorised or simply understood. The metapoetic sub-text in Propertius serves as productive stimulus to the creation of *Astrophil and Stella* and animates it with a literary resonance and moral seriousness beyond that of simple poetic virtuosity. Astrophil and his wayward muse may certainly turn their backs on *imitatio* as a route to poetic excellence, but Sidney does not.

Chapter 3

‘In six numbers let my work rise, and subside in five’: authority and impotence in *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7, Donne’s ‘To His Mistress Going To Bed’, and Nashe’s *Choice of Valentines*

In *Redeeming the Text*, Charles Martindale suggests that insights into classical texts might be ‘locked up’ in later receptions.¹ The previous two chapters have read Renaissance *imitatio* as a sophisticated intertextual and reception practice, a self-conscious dialogue which serves to illuminate Wyatt’s and Sidney’s sixteenth-century texts. The structure of the chapters, starting with Catullus and Propertius, might be taken to imply that the Latin poetry is always somehow originary, not just because it was written first in temporal terms, but because it reveals something significant about the later texts. This chapter unsettles that familiar paradigm, and takes up Martindale’s challenge of ‘backwards-reading’, experimenting with how readings of two erotic poems from the 1590s - Donne’s Elegy 2 and Thomas Nashe’s *Choice of Valentines* - can open up and refresh even such familiar texts as *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7.² Despite the apparently linear chronology of the earlier chapters, this project is driven overall by an understanding of intertextuality as always anachronistic (in a positive sense), of literary interpretation as moving across and between texts, and of necessarily implicating the reader - a historically situated figure who is always working to make texts ‘readable’ in the present moment.³

Martindale’s contention is a valuable one. However, the terminology (‘locked up’) might be taken to imply that meaning is static and dormant within a text, always there but somehow invisible until a later text provides a key to release it. This chapter draws on Martindale’s insight but explores a less linear (in whichever direction) and more reciprocal or relational reading strategy. It

¹ Martindale (1993) 7, now also (2013).

² Martindale (2013) 175. Donne’s ‘To His Mistress Going to Bed’ is also known as elegy 19: following Carey (1990, revised 2000), it is identified as elegy 2 here and all quotations are from this edition.

³ Martindale (2013) 171.

considers how moving between texts results in mutual illumination that complicates ideas of which text is elucidating which. As John Frow remarks, ‘the identification of an intertext is an act of interpretation. The intertext is not a real and causative source but a theoretical construct formed by and serving the purpose of a reading... the prehistory of the text is not a given but is relative to an interpretative grid’.⁴ In the case of sixteenth-century *imitatio*, the ‘pre-history’ of a text may not be taken as ‘given’ with complete security, but may be gestured to, though not limited by, the text itself: Nashe’s *Choice of Valentines*, for example, explicitly states that ‘Ovids wanton Muse... is the fountain whence my streames doe flowe’.⁵

The reciprocal readings offered here are separated into two stages: section 3.1 starts with *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7, and considers what an association with Ovid enables in Donne’s and Nashe’s texts. Section 3.2 then reverses the direction of interpretation and explores how readings of these Ovidian receptions might inflect and reflect back on *Amores* 1.5. In line with Martindale’s proposition, re-reading Ovid via Donne and Nashe offers new perspectives on a familiar text, and serves as a model for bringing previously unexplored aspects of this elegy into focus via its later receptions. Given that Ovid’s central presence in medieval and Renaissance culture is uncontested and extensively documented, this chapter will not discuss Ovid’s transmission in any detail.⁶

Amores 1.5, the story of a successful sexual encounter, and 3.7, the impotence poem, have been read together before.⁷ As both Alison Keith and Alison Sharrock point out, Ovidian elegy might be read as ‘programmatically

⁴ Frow (1990) 46; also O’Rourke (2012) on the agency of the reader in identifying intertexts.

⁵ Epilogue 4-5. All quotations from *Choice of Valentines* are from McKerrow (1958) which follows the Petyt manuscript from the Inner Temple library with collations from the Bodleian manuscript: for full details of the 6 extant manuscripts, see Moulton (2000) 187-9. The 3 manuscripts which had not been found when McKerrow was working on his edition of Nashe only give parts of the poem and are discussed briefly below in terms of how they re-make Nashe’s narrative. The Bodleian manuscript also contains an English translation of the *Ars Amatoria*.

⁶ See Keach (1977), Moss (1982), Barkan (1986), Barnard (1987), Martindale (1988), Bate (1994), Clark (1994), Stapleton (1996), Enterline (2000), Taylor (2000), Lyne (2001), Hexter (2002), Brown (2004), Bull (2005), Pugh (2005), Oakley-Brown (2006), Clark, Coulson & McKinley (2011), Kilgour (2012). On Ovid in the English humanist curriculum, Green (2009) xi, 35-36, 40-41, 221; on transmission and manuscript traditions, Richmond (2002).

⁷ Keith (1994), Sharrock (1995).

impotent' so that 3.7 stands in for the general character of the genre which frequently defines itself as *mollis*, 'soft'.⁸ And yet, at the same time, poems such as *Amores* 1.5 present a contrasting view of elegy as being built on an aggressive and potent masculinity which positions seduction as close to assault.⁹ These two postures are reflected in the dynamic between *servitium amoris*, 'the slavery of love', and *militia amoris*, 'the soldiering or military campaign of love', the systems of tropes routinely utilised by elegy.¹⁰ *Amores* 1.1 also embeds this binary at the heart of elegy as 'Ovid' describes the elegiac couplet: *sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat*, 'in six numbers let my work rise, and sink again in five' (1.1.27).¹¹ The phallic imagery is unmistakable as the rise of the 'hard' hexameter associated with epic is followed by the deflation of the 'soft' pentameter so that the elegiac couplet is given the 'sexual rhythm of male performance'.¹² What we have here are two systematic arrangements where hexameter, epic, *militia amoris* and sexual conquest, are set against the pentameter, elegy, *servitium amoris*, and sexual failure, and the two alternate to create both the elegiac couplet and elegy itself. In this model, *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7 may be read as the quintessential elements of the genre which constitute and embody what elegy is.

Turning to Donne and Nashe, what we will see in the texts studied here is that these two states of phallic power and disappointment are contained within single poems: the *Choice of Valentines* which alternates between sexual triumph

⁸ Keith (1994), quotation from Sharrock (1995) 159. See Williams (2010) 140 on terms such as *delicatus*, *enervis*, *mollis* or *mollitia* being associated with effeminacy in Roman thought: 'softness is the antithesis of masculinity' (140). *Mollitia*, though, is a complicated term for the Romans which can be used in diverse ways to characterise 'an inability to act in a forceful 'manly' way': see Edwards (1993) especially chapter 2; quotation from 64.

⁹ e.g. Cahoon (1988), Keith (1994), Greene (1998), Sharrock (2002c).

¹⁰ On *militia amoris*, see Introduction, on *servitium amoris* Copley (1947), Lyne (1979), McCarthy (1998).

¹¹ Latin quotations from the *Amores* are from Kenney (1961, 1994), translations from Showerman, revised by Goold (2002).

¹² See Keith (1994) 34 on the *durus* hexameter and *mollis* pentameter; Hallett (2012) describes the metre as 'alternatively turgid and detumescent', also Morgan (2012) on the elegiac couplet though, oddly, he does not read it in sexual terms. George Puttenham, in his *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589), describes the elegiac couplet as 'a piteous manner of metre, placing a limping pentameter after a lusty hexameter': see Introduction.

and collapse, and 'To His Mistress Going To Bed' which, as read here, appears to be a poem of erotic achievement but conceals a sub-text of fretful anxiety and unease. All four texts are built around a detailed sexual engagement between a man and his mistress, and the encounter is described with varying degrees of explicitness. Both the male and female bodies in these texts are thus 'symbolic construct[s]', and one of the aims of this chapter is to assess what cultural work they are made to perform in the texts under investigation, how the sexual acts they depict are made to signify.¹³

As we have noted, Nashe positions his *Choice of Valentines* unequivocally as a response to Ovid.¹⁴ That Donne imitated Ovid and, particularly, the *Amores* is also widely recognised: M.L. Stapleton cites the general influence of the *Amores* on Donne's love poetry, principally through the characterisation of the narrative voice; Laurence Lerner sees Donne's *Elegies* as prime imitations of Ovid; Alan Armstrong goes so far as to call the *Amores* 'a valuable textbook for the poet [Donne]' and Jonathan Bate remarks on the influence of Ovid's Corinna on Donne's women.¹⁵ Prior to these critics, A. LaBranche discussed Donne's debt to Latin love elegy more generally, and described Donne's *Elegies* as 'the most original and carefully fashioned imitation of the classical genre'.¹⁶ Despite acknowledging the influence of Catullus and Propertius, LaBranche sees Ovid as 'the most certain source of elegy for Donne'.¹⁷ John Carey agrees with LaBranche on the dominant influence of Ovid on Donne but contends 'there was more going on in their creator's brain than Ovid dreamed of'.¹⁸ More particularly, Arthur Marotti, Carey and J.B. Leishman all agree that *Amores* 1.5 serves as a direct

¹³ Suleiman (1986) 2 uses this term of the female body but it is also applicable to male bodies: see e.g. Fisher (2006), Simons (2011).

¹⁴ On Nashe as an 'English quasi-Ovid' see Lyne (2002), also Crewe (1982) 49, Franz (1989), Stapleton (1991 & 1995), Moulton (2000) 170. McKerrow (1958) 116 on Nashe reading Ovid, and 133 on Ovid being the most frequently quoted classical poet in Nashe's works with 27 Latin quotations from the *Amores*.

¹⁵ Stapleton (1996) 155, Armstrong (1977), Bate (1994) 4-5, Lerner (1988); also Easthope (1989), Low (1990), Belsey (1994) 130-49, Singer (2009) who all briefly comment on Donne's 'Ovidianism'; Bald (1970) 47 on Donne's reading of Marlowe's translation of the *Amores* at Cambridge.

¹⁶ LaBranche (1966) 359.

¹⁷ LaBranche (1966) 360.

¹⁸ Carey (1981) 41.

model for 'To His Mistress Going To Bed', and Marotti supports Carey's reading of Donne's text as a 'striptease' poem which takes delight in humiliating the woman at its centre through the act of commanding her to undress.¹⁹ The readings here offer a more complicated view of both Donne and Ovid, and the intertextual relationship between them.

Neither Donne's *Elegy 2* nor Nashe's *Choice of Valentines* can be dated with accuracy but both have generally been attributed to c.1593. Donne was in his twenties at that time and finishing his education at Lincoln's Inn after studying at Oxford and Cambridge.²⁰ His poem circulated in manuscript and its initial audience was most likely to have been his fellow Inns of Court students: male, young, well-educated, both aspiring towards high social position and yet also asserting a rebellious and cynical attitude towards the Elizabethan court and its courtiers.²¹ When Donne's poems were first published posthumously in 1633, 'To His Mistress Going To Bed' was excluded from the collection, and the poem was not put into print until 1669 after the Restoration of Charles II.²²

Nashe's poem also circulated in manuscript and was not printed until 1899.²³ The poem is dedicated to Ferdinand Stanley, Lord Strange, who died in 1594 so it was certainly written before then. If it were one of the 'filthy rhymes' Gabriel Harvey accused Nashe of writing in his *Pierces Supererogation* (1593) then a composition date of 1592-3 seems indicated. There is, therefore, a strong possibility that the *Choice of Valentines* was actually circulating in manuscript in 1593, the same year as Donne's poem. Both poets were associated with the universities and Inns of Court, and both draw attention to Ovidian precedents.²⁴

¹⁹ Leishman (1951) 52-73, Marotti (1986) 53-54; Carey (1981) 106.

²⁰ Carey (1990, 2000) xxiii, 422; on Donne's life, Bald (1970).

²¹ Bald (1970), Keach (1977) 29, Carey (1990, 2000) xx-xxi, Marotti (1986) 15-18.

²² Carey (1981) 104, Hatfield (2007).

²³ On the dating of Nashe's text see Moulton (2000) 187; on Nashe's 1899 private printing see McKerrow (1958) 400; Kuin and Prescott (2000) 15. Both Donne's elegy and Nashe's poem are in the Rosenbach manuscript (Rosenbach MS 1083/15 fols. 9v-11v) undiscovered when McKerrow edited the complete works of Nashe: see Marotti (1986) 18 and Moulton (2000) 190.

²⁴ On Donne as a 'coterie poet' associated with the Inns of Court see Marotti (1986); on many manuscripts containing erotic poems being associated with the Inns of Court see Moulton (2000) 41; on Nashe's biography see Hibbard (1962), Nicholl (1984), Hilliard (1986), Hutson (1989); on the *Choice of Valentines* as an Ovidian imitation, Frantz (1989), Stapleton (1991).

Despite Nashe's explicit declaration of Ovidian *imitatio* in its epilogue, the *Choice of Valentines* still receives little critical attention other than by scholars concerned with trying to re-construct the boundaries of Renaissance 'pornography'.²⁵ Almost all Nashe scholars have dismissed the *Choice of Valentines* as being from the 'disreputable' part of his career, as a 'notorious pornographic verse narrative', as 'unadulterated' pornography or have ignored it all together.²⁶ By placing it alongside Donne's elegy and Ovid's *Amores*, the readings here challenge these superficial, even coy, judgements and attend to Nashe's text as certainly a bawdy poem but one with important things to tell us about Ovidian reception in the early 1590s.

3.1 'Hir arme's are spread, and I am all unarm'd lyke one with Ovids cursed hemlock charm'd': reading Donne and Nashe through Ovid

Amores 1.5 stages the belated entrance of Corinna five poems into the first book.²⁷ In his opening poem, 'Ovid' has already been converted by Cupid from a potential writer of epic (*arma... violentaque bella*, 'arms and the violent deeds of war', 1.1.1) into a reluctant writer of elegy but, as he admits himself, has no object for his amatory verse, 'neither a boy, nor a maiden with long and well-kept locks'.²⁸ Drawing attention to the fact that an absence of a suitable love object does not necessarily preclude the writing of elegy, this first poem poses a question about the authenticity of the *puella* which is carried through the rest of the book.²⁹ The *Ars Amatoria*, tentatively dated to c.2 BCE even comments on

²⁵ On pornography as a term in general see Hunt (1993); on 'pornography' in the Renaissance see Franz (1972, 1989), El-Gabalawy (1976), Merrix (1986), Young (1987), Findlen (1993), Talvacchia (1999), Moulton (2000).

²⁶ Hilliard (1986), Boehrer (1989), Franz (1972), Hutson (1989); Hibbard (1962) 57 dismisses it as 'valueless as poetry' despite acknowledging its literary debts to Ovid's *Ars* and *Amores*, and to Chaucer. There are signs that Nashe is being rehabilitated however: Guy-Bray et al. (2013).

²⁷ There is an unnamed married lover in 1.4 but 1.5 is the first time Corinna is named: Boyd (1997) 154, Greene (1998) 77. It is impossible to date the *Amores* with certainty but c.22-19 BCE after the death of Tibullus (19 BCE) is indicated: Boyd (1997) 6, 179, Davis (1999) 445, Harrison (2002) 79, Tarrant (2002) 13.

²⁸ *Aut puer aut longas compta puella comas*, *Am.* 1.1.20. For other readings of 1.5 see e.g. Huntingford (1981), Papanghelis (1989), Gratwick (1991), Keith (1994), Sharrock (1995), Greene (1998).

²⁹ Sharrock (2002d).

this ambiguity: *et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant*, ‘and many ask, who is my Corinna’.³⁰ The arrival of Corinna in 1.5 might thus be seen as the ‘true’ beginning of the narrator’s erotic enterprise and it is worth examining how this central poetic material is introduced.

Ecce, Corinna venit, tunica velata recincta,
candida dividua colla tegente coma –
qualiter in thalamos formosa Semiramis isse
dicitur et multis Laïs amata viris
1.5.9-12

... lo! Corinna comes, draped in unfastened tunic, with divided hair falling
over fair, white neck – such as ‘tis said was beautiful Semiramis when
passing to her bridal chamber, and Laïs loved of many men

The injunction *ecce*, meaning ‘look!’ or ‘behold!’, draws immediate attention to Corinna’s status in this poem as an object to be viewed, and the present tense of her arrival (*venit*) places her before us, as much for the readers’ visual pleasure as for the narrator’s.³¹ Her body is veiled (*velata*) by her tunic, both concealing and provocatively revealing itself at the same time, and the tunic is itself seductively *recincta*, ‘unfastened’.³² Her hair, too, is loose on her neck rather than being formally dressed, and she is likened (*qualiter*) to Semiramis, the mythical Eastern queen of Babylon, a ruler in her own right and a woman known for her sexual prowess; and Laïs, a name associated with a number of expensive Greek courtesans.³³ Images of the East, luxury, decadence, and an acutely sexualised beauty are all present in this crucial first description of Corinna.

³⁰ *Ars Amatoria* 3.538. *Quae* can also mean ‘what’ here thus interrogating not just the relationship between Corinna and any ‘real’ Roman mistress, but also the figurative meaning of Corinna: see especially Wyke (2002) on the *scripta puella* and the elegiac mistress as a textual embodiment of the poet’s work and elegy itself.

³¹ Kennedy (2008) also draws attention to the change of tense from the imperfect of *aestus erat* (1) to *venit* (9). See Nicoll (1977) on intertexts between Corinna’s arrival and Hector’s ghost in the *Aeneid*.

³² The Loeb translates *recincta* as ‘girded’: for *recingo*, ‘to ungird, loosen, unfasten’, see *OLD* (a) and (b).

³³ Skinner (2005) 168-9 on Laïs of Corinth. Vout (2007) 21 makes the point that Semiramis, once a slave of Ninus, killed him to seize the throne and become queen so that she is a deeply ambivalent figure. On Greek courtesans generally see Davidson (1998).

Possible allusions to Cleopatra and Virgil's Dido may be traced here, both Eastern queens like Semiramis, and associated with a disruptive female sexuality. There are also traces of Venus to be found, a goddess associated with the East via her birth near Cyprus, who is connected to prostitutes and prostitution generally and, especially, Laïs, whose ephemeral loveliness was traditionally contrasted to the immortal beauty of the goddess.³⁴

Ovid's Corinna is thus a sexual spectacle created by the voyeuristic gaze of the narrator as an erotic object, and is placed within a tradition of images of women who exist, at least partially, for the sexual pleasure of men.³⁵ Despite the fact that she moves into the room while he is lying down, she is made a passive image of visual pleasure controlled by the watcher's eye and is without a reciprocal gaze of her own. The vision of the poet-narrator creates the matter of his poetry and then renders that controlling and productive gaze in words so that our pleasure in 'seeing' Corinna is a reflection of his: our eyes re-perform, through reading, the voyeuristic creative act of the poet.³⁶

To be looked at in Roman culture is not necessarily to be disempowered and to be the viewer does not always equate with being the winner in the visual hierarchy but certainly positions of authority and dominance are negotiated through the visual.³⁷ Since literary *eros* as articulated in erotic elegy is almost

³⁴ See the Venus and the Propoetides episode in *Met.* 10.238-42: they were, according to the text, the first prostitutes. This brief episode serves as a transition into the story of Pygmalion, a significant intertext for 1.5 even though it was written after the *Amores*. On Venus in the *Met.* see Johnson (1996). See Skinner (2005) 168-9 on Laïs and her connections with Aphrodite; Propertius 2.6.1-6 also mentions Laïs of Corinth as a renowned Greek courtesan.

³⁵ On the gaze in Roman culture, see Fredrick (1995, 2002), Barton (2000), Salzman-Mitchell (2005), Elsner (2007a, 2007b); Frontisi (1996) discusses how the eye and penis 'may substitute for each other' (93-94). On the possibility of a theorised 'female gaze' see Kaplan (1983), also Goldhill (2001).

³⁶ Cf. eye imagery in Propertius' elegies e.g. 1.1 where the narrator is captured (*cepit*) by Cynthia's eyes, and his being vanquished by love is figured as a lowering of his eyes in submission. On classical theories of vision see e.g. Plato's *Phaedrus*; Donaldson-Evans (1980) 11-13 for a discussion of Plato's theory of the eye, and Gordon (2002) 91-92 on Lucretius and the theory of simulacra.

³⁷ The triumph, for example, was a spectacular ritual in Roman culture where to be publicly seen as *triumphator* was an endorsement of military power; *Amores* 1.2 subverts and eroticises this idea when the narrator depicts himself as a captive in the triumph of Cupid, an image re-used by Petrarch in his 'Triumph of Love'. On the Roman triumph in general see Beard (2007); on *Am.* 1.2 see Miller (1995) and Davis (1999). Vout (2007) 21 discusses the way 'there is power in being

always non-reciprocal, it is not surprising that visuality is one of the spheres in which the asymmetry of this particular type of eroticism is played out.

So to return to *Amores* 1.5, it is worth examining the scene before Corinna's arrival. It is a hot day (*aestus erat*), just past noon, and the narrator is lying in the middle of his bed (*medio... toro*). The shutters to his window are half-opened (*pars adaperita fuit, pars altera clausa fenestrae*), and the resultant dimness in his room is likened to that of a shaded woodland, or twilight or the break of day.³⁸ The reiteration of words conveying intermediate or liminal points is striking: *mediamque... horam*, 'the middle hour', *medio... toro*, 'the middle of the couch', *pars... pars altera*, 'one part... the other part', *crepuscula*, 'twilight', *ubi nox abiit, nec tamen orta dies*, 'when night has gone but the day has not yet sprung'. The scene set is both a prosaic time for rest in the hottest part of the Mediterranean day but also a time between time heralding the possibility of dreams, visions, epiphanies. Noon, for the ancient Greeks and Romans, is as replete with 'paranormal possibilities' as midnight.³⁹

As well as this eerie sense of being on a threshold which seems to presage something supernatural, the text simultaneously points to an atmosphere of sensuality, albeit one with hints of fear and violence. *Aestus* might mean 'hot' or 'sultry' but it also means 'passion' which, together with the image of the narrator lying on the sleeping couch, creates an aura of sexual anticipation.⁴⁰ The imagery of woodland (*silvae*) invokes the potentiality of the *locus amoenus*, recalling the site of many of the rapes of nymphs in Greek myth and in Ovid's own (not yet written) *Metamorphoses*. *Fugiente... Phoebus* is a metaphor for the departure of the sun, but *fugiente*, 'fleeing', also reminds us of the number of mythic female

passive': she is concerned with a later period of Roman history but the point still has validity at the time at which Ovid is writing.

³⁸ *Quale fere silvae lumen habere solent, | qualia sublucent fugiente crepuscula Phoebus, | aut ubi non abiit, nec tamen orta dies* (1.5.4-6)

³⁹ Papanghelis (1989) 54. In the *Argonautica*, for example, the divine goddesses of Libya come to Jason 'at high noon, when Libya lay scorching under a burning sun' (4.1312-14); in *Antigone*, too, the sentries describe the strange whirlwind out of which Antigone appears as taking place when 'the sun stood dead above our heads, | a huge white ball in the noon sky, beating, | blazing down' (460-62).

⁴⁰ OLD (1) and (2); also (5a) as 'passion', 'fire of love'.

characters who flee from the pursuing Apollo, not least, of course, Daphne who would become the archetype of the elegiac - and Petrarchan - beloved.⁴¹ And the narrator himself describes the shadowy light as that which 'shrinking maids should have whose timid modesty hopes to hide away'. The image of *verecundis... puellis*, 'modest girls' whose chastity (*pudor*) leads them to seek hiding places (*latebras*) supports the subtext of mythic sexual pursuit and the girls who try to escape sexual violation. It thus serves as an ironic prefiguration of Corinna's arrival whose own appearance and behaviour have a complex relationship to ideas of modesty, chastity, hiding and sexual aggression.

So how does the text enable our understanding of Corinna who arrives so enigmatically after this build up of atmosphere and mystery? One way in which Corinna has been read is as a figment of the narrator's sexual imagination.⁴² In this account, she is created by the poet as a sexual fantasy and offered to us as readers to share, implying an ideal audience of male readers. This notion fits with the problem already aired in 1.1. that 'Ovid' has been turned from epic poet into elegist by Cupid but has no 'real' material with which to work. Propertius, as we have seen, constructs Cynthia as textual *materia* for his elegies and as the embodiment of the poetry produced so it is unsurprising that Ovid's texts adopt a similar trope following his elegiac predecessor.⁴³ Propertius 1.3, especially, where the narrator gazes on a sleeping Cynthia and re-constructs her in his imagination as always *qualis*, 'like', something else (Ariadne helpless and abandoned by Theseus; Andromeda lying in bed after having been rescued by Perseus; a sleeping bacchante exhausted by her frenzy, 1.3.1-6) is recalled by Ovid's use of *qualiter* in describing Corinna.⁴⁴ Both Cynthia and Corinna are

⁴¹ *Met.* 1.452-567. See chapter 1 on Apollo and Daphne as a central myth of elegy and Petrarchan poetry.

⁴² Du Quesnay (1973), Greene (1998) 79. See also Huntingford (1981) on the problematic narrative situation of this poem.

⁴³ Wyke (2002), Greene (1995b) on Propertius' 'fantasy' women; Keith (1994) on connections between Corinna and Elegia in 3.1.

⁴⁴ *Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina / languida desertis Cnosia litoribus; / qualis et accubuit primo Cepheia somno / libera iam duris cotibus Andromede; / Nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis / qualis in herboso concidit Apidano*, 'like the maid of Cnossus as in a swoon she lay on the deserted shore when Theseus' ship sailed away; like Cepheus' daughter Andromeda as she

likened to mythic (or semi-mythic in Ovid's case) women who are associated with an overt sexuality (Semiramis, Laïs, Ariadne, a bacchante) which prefigures their own appearances and suggests their sexual availability in the eyes of each narrator. Each female figure is composed from a pre-existing repository of erotic images which shade and narrow the possibilities through which we might view these women, making them appear inevitably and almost teleologically sexual.

Specific aspects of Augustan visual culture might inflect the creation and representation of Corinna in this poem. Scholars have commented on the overwhelming number of sexually explicit images commonly available in Rome at this time.⁴⁵ Erotic frescoes, paintings, engravings, sculptures abound in both a public and private context: on the walls of public buildings such as bath-houses and of private homes; on cups, gemstones, mirrors and lamps. The paintings found in the luxurious Villa Farnesina on the Tiber, for example, have been dated to c.20 BCE, close to the time the *Amores* were being written, and are examples of the Roman taste for sophisticated erotic paintings showing beautiful Hellenised bodies and a penchant for mythic scenes.⁴⁶

Ovid himself gives us further examples of the contemporary prevalence of erotic art: in the *Tristia* he writes 'surely in our houses, even as figures of old heroes shine, painted by an artist's hand, so in some place a small tablet depicts the varying unions and forms of love'.⁴⁷ In the *Ars Amatoria*, too, he mentions books detailing sexual postures, and describes various sexual positions which,

rested in her first slumber on her release from the rugged cliff; no less like the Thracian bacchant, exhausted after incessant dances, when she collapses on the grassy bank of the Apidanus' *Prop.* 1.3.1-6.

⁴⁵Myerowitz (1992), Parker (1992), Fredrick (1995), Clarke (1998, 2003).

⁴⁶Clarke (1998) 93-107, Galinsky (1996) 183-187; Myerowitz (1992) 139 on the villa possibly belonging to Julia, Augustus' daughter; Fantham (2006) 74-76 though describes the evidence of ownership as 'circumstantial'.

⁴⁷*Scilicet in domibus nostris ut prisca virorum / artificis fulgent corpora picta manu, / sic quae concubitus varios Venerisque figuras / exprimat, est aliquo parva tabella loco, Tr.* 2.521-24; *utque velis, Venerem iungunt per mille figuras: invenit plures nulla tabella modos*, 'according to your taste they will embrace you in a thousand ways; no picture could devise more modes than they', *Ars* 2.679-80. The term 'erotic art' is used here as a description since it is not necessarily a recognised category or art form at this time.

As she stood before my eyes with drapery laid aside, nowhere on all her body was sign of fault. What shoulders, what arms did I see – and touch! How suited for caress the form of her breasts! How smooth her body beneath the faultless bosom! What a long and beautiful side! How youthfully fair a thigh!

Corinna's body is produced through the visual description of what the narrator sees and feels, recreating the artist's vision and touch in words.⁵² *Menda*, translated here as 'fault', also means a textual correction, the ancient equivalent of a printer's or typesetter's error, thus revealing Corinna in terms of a perfect textual artefact.⁵³ At the same time, her physical perfection is that of a work of visual art: not just a poem or a book of poetry but also a statue or carving of marble or ivory.⁵⁴ Especially telling is the sense that this Corinna is more beautiful than a real woman could be.⁵⁵

So one way of reading Corinna which is sanctioned by the text is as a piece of hyper-real erotic art brought to life through the force of the viewer's imagination. Another is to see her in the context of divine epiphany, and the Latin precedent suggested by several scholars as an intertext for this reading is Catullus 68 where Lesbia comes to meet the narrator at the borrowed house of Allius:⁵⁶

quo mea se molli candida diva pede
intulit et trito fulgentem in limine plantam
innixa arguta constituit solea
68.70-72

⁵² See Valladares (2012) on the parallels between poetic and pictorial representations of erotic love in Augustan Rome.

⁵³ *OLD* (1) 'bodily defect', 'blemish'; (2) 'fault, error, especially in writing'; on *menda* see Keith (1994) 31.

⁵⁴ Keith (1994) 31.

⁵⁵ See Cicero *De Inventione* 2.1-5 on Zeuxis' painting of Helen where the perfect female body has to be composed from the individual elements of different models. Also Greene (1998) and Wyke (2002) on the elegiac *puella* as a collection of body parts put at the disposal of the narrator, 'dismembered and fragmented by the *amator's* controlling gaze': Greene (1998) 77.

⁵⁶ Nicoll (1977), Hinds (1987c), Papanghelis (1989), Keith (1994), Clauss (1995), Boyd (1997) 155, Hardie (2002) 42; Greene (1998) 79 argues against this interpretation.

Thither my fair goddess delicately stepped, and set the sole of her
shining foot on the smooth threshold, as she pressed on her slender
sandal

The textual joke of Catullus' *candida diva* being turned into Ovid's *candida dividua* is cited as support for this reading, and the idea of epiphany is certainly upheld by the mysterious atmosphere evoked at the start of the poem.⁵⁷ Section 3.2 will return to these notions of Corinna as art-work and as divinity after reading Donne and Nashe, and will examine how these later receptions of 1.5 allow us to combine both ideas and recalibrate what they might be made to mean. For the moment, though, it is instructive to consider the nature of the physical encounter between the narrator and Corinna, and the way that it is inverted in *Amores* 3.7.

Deripui tunicam... pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi, 'I tore away the tunic... but still she struggled to have the tunic shelter her' (1.5.13-4): in keeping with the tropes of *militia amoris*, physical love is represented as a battle (*pugnabat*) where instead of seduction we witness the violent ripping away (*deripui*) of Corinna's clothes. Once naked, the aggression is transferred from the woman's coverings to her body itself: *forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi*, 'how suited for caress the form of her breasts!' (1.5.20). This Showerman/Gould translation disallows some of the suppressed force of the Latin, re-writing it in keeping with the idea of 'Ovid' marvelling at the erotic beauty of Corinna. *Premi* might, though, be more tellingly translated as 'pressed hard, gripped tightly' rather than 'caressed', a change which subtly alters the register of the translated text.⁵⁸ *Apta*, 'suited for', suggests this suppressed violence is provoked by Corinna's own body. In terms of the binary being traced between *durus* and *mollis*, this poem aligns itself with the conditions of epic struggle, with the 'rise' of the hexameter, and the successful completion of the act of love.

There are two further points worth noting in this poem in preparation for the way in which they are treated in 3.7 as well as the sixteenth-century

⁵⁷ e.g. Papanghelis (1989) 55, Boyd (1997) 155.

⁵⁸ OLD 1b: *premo*, press, grip tight.

receptions: the aftermath of this encounter is depicted in terms of mutual pleasure (*lassi requievemus ambo*, 'outwearied, we both lay quiet in repose', 1.5.25); and the sexual act itself is glossed decorously (*cetera quis nescit?*, 'the rest, who does not know?', 1.5.25). The presence or absence of reciprocity, and the articulation or silencing of the actual mechanics of intercourse become key indicators to the way the other texts under consideration locate themselves in relation to *Amores* 1.5.

Amores 3.7 may be read as an instructive companion piece to 1.5.⁵⁹ In this text 'Ovid' recounts a story of sexual failure, an encounter marred by his body's refusal to perform. The *puella* in this poem appears not to be Corinna, but is beautiful (*formosa*, 3.7.1), longed for (*votis saepe petita*, 3.7.1), and willing (*osculaque inservit cupida luctantia lingua*, 'and with eager tongue implanted wanton kisses', 3.7.9).⁶⁰ Despite this, however, the narrator's body remains *languidus*, 'limp, powerless', and he lies uselessly on the bed, in contrast to his earlier triumph. The girl tries to arouse him through enticing words and flattery (*et mihi blanditias dixit dominumque vocavit*, 3.7.11), but her calling him 'master', a hierarchical term of status and dominance, only serves to underscore his lack of potency at this moment. His own laments centre on his lack of masculinity: *quo me iuvenemque virumque? / Nec iuvenem nec me sensit amica virum!*, 'what is the point of being young and male? My girlfriend found me neither young nor male' (3.7.19-20)... *sed vir non contigit illi*, 'though she had no man in her grasp', (3.7.43). The *puella* tries more direct means of stimulation: *molliter admota sollicitare manu*, 'applying her hand and gently coaxing it' (3.7.74), but to no avail: *nullas consurgere posse per artes*, 'it would not get up' (literally, 'no rise was possible through skill or tricks') and continues to 'lie down' (*procubuisse*, 3.7.76). Eventually the girl flounces from the bed still wrapped in her unbound tunic (*tunica velata soluta*, 3.7.81), so like the one worn by Corinna

⁵⁹ See also Keith (1994), Sharrock (1995) Butrica (1999), Holzberg (2005), Hallett (2012).

⁶⁰ Hallett (2012) 277 on the *puella*.

in 1.5 (*tunica velata recincta*, 1.5.9), and is forced to cover up the 'shameful' fact that her lover is unable to perform.⁶¹

Amores 3.7 thus serves as a counter to 1.5, and is an embodiment of *mollitia* as the vigorous masculinity of the earlier elegy falls away and is replaced by a wry poem of lethargy and limpness.⁶² The (eventual) reciprocal sexual pleasure of 1.5 is turned into a mutual frustration, and the visualisation of Corinna's body is exchanged for a greater focus on the under-performing male body which calls the narrator's masculinity into question. If 1.5 incorporates the 'hard' rise of the hexameter of elegy and the values encoded alongside it, then 3.7 embodies the 'soft' pentameter. Importantly, though, the impotence represented by 3.7 is a temporary one, and the poem itself foregrounds this point when the narrator addresses himself to his errant member: 'Now, too late, just look at it, it is well and strong, now clamouring for business and the fray'.⁶³ The movement is a cyclical one, alternating as do the metrical elements of the elegiac couplet. Other metaliterary readings of 3.7 suggest that it operates as a disengagement with the elegiac project, and as a farewell to the genre, suggestive ideas for our reading of Nashe to come.⁶⁴ Also worth noting here in advance of turning to Donne and Nashe is that this poem, in line with 1.5, while dealing explicitly with a sexual encounter – even a failed one – remains 'lexically inoffensive'.⁶⁵ The ways in which our sixteenth-century receptions either conform (Donne) or abandon (Nashe) this practice will be assessed for what they might tell us about those poems, their relationships to each other, and their use of Ovid.

⁶¹ See Butrica (1999) on the associations of water and washing in this elegy. On Wyatt's re-writing of the unbound tunic, see chapter 1.

⁶² 3.7 is not necessarily the only impotence poem in elegy: Catullus 3 has also been read in these terms, though this interpretation is dependent on *passer* being understood as slang for 'penis': see chapter 1 for debates for and against this reading. Hallett (2012) reads 3.7 against Catullus 50 and 67, and in contrast to Catullus 32. Bates (2013) 103 reads Wyatt's 'They Flee From Me' as an impotence poem, if only in a psychic sense, and as a reception of 3.7.

⁶³ *Quae nunc, ecce, vigent intempestiva valentque, / nunc opus exposcunt militiamque suam*, 3.7.67-8.

⁶⁴ Keith (1994) 38, Holzberg (2005) 377.

⁶⁵ Adams (1982) 224 on the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*.

Situated like *Amores* 1.5 in the intimacy of a bedroom, Donne's 'To His Mistress Going To Bed' (Elegy 2) is another voyeuristic text which implicates the reader in watching and overhearing an erotic engagement between the narrator and his mistress.⁶⁶ It takes the form of a monologue given only through the male lover's voice, and has an undecided narrative status: it might be a textual representation of an encounter where the words of the poem are spoken aloud by the lover; it might represent the private thoughts of the lover that exist only in his mind as he watches his mistress prepare for the night; or it might be the sexual fantasy of a lone would-be lover creating a mistress out of his imagination – perhaps with the literary help of erotic texts such as Ovid's 1.5.⁶⁷ If the latter, Donne's narrator can be read as becoming 'Ovid' in this poem, re-enacting the prior text for his – and our? – sexual, but also literary, pleasure.

The elegy is articulated via a series of imperatives: 'off with that girdle' (5), 'unpin that spangled breastplate' (7), 'unlace yourself' (9), 'off with that happy busk' (11), thus encoding a familiar gender dynamic and hierarchy of command: the dominant and dominating male unclothing, even if only through words and not deeds, a silent and sexually accommodating mistress. Where 'Ovid' tears off Corinna's tunic, Donne's lover orders his mistress to undress herself. Masculine power and prerogative are eroticised as a 'sexualisation of authority', an equation between the entitlement to demand and a state of sexual licence which turns the love object into an eroticised and objectivised spectacle to be enjoyed.⁶⁸

Undermining this position, however, is a strange visual absence at the heart of Donne's text. While the mistress' costume is elaborately described even

⁶⁶ On the gaze and Renaissance ideology of the eye, see Lobanov-Rostovsky (1997), on the importance of the visual in this elegy, Farmer (1984). Donne calls a series of his poems 'elegies': while they make use of the erotic subject matter of the Latin genre, they do not attempt to replicate the metre.

⁶⁷ See Huntingford (1981) on the problematic narrative status of *Am.* 1.5. which Donne's text seems to replicate.

⁶⁸ Quotation from Vout (2007) 6. This trope is widespread in classical literature generally: e.g. Ovid's Jupiter in the *Metamorphoses*; Tarquinius and the rape of Lucretia (Livy, 1.57-59), Nero (Tacitus, *Annals*, 13-15), and Suetonius' lives of the emperors, all texts in which political autocracy is articulated in terms of sexual excess.

as it is discarded (her girdle 'like heaven's zone glistening', 5; her bodice as a 'spangled breastplate', 7), her underlying body remains invisible. Contrary to the expectations set up by *Amores* 1.5, we are refused, even cheated of, the sexual description of the female body which the text implicitly promises. Instead, the mistress' clothes become a substitute and proxy for her self and are themselves fetishised in place of the body beneath.⁶⁹

When the mistress is ordered to 'unlace yourself' (9), the sound of her clothes coming off replaces her voice: 'for that harmonious chime | tells me from you, that now 'tis your bed time' (9-10). It is not the mistress who speaks but her coverings, so that communication is between the lover and her clothing. His 'envy' (11) a line later is for her 'happy busk' (11), again foregrounding the emotional relationship that seems to exist between the male lover and his mistress' elaborate costume. (Busks, to which we will return presently, were placed within a bodice as stiffeners.⁷⁰) Where we might expect to find a detailed and itemised description of the mistress' body (the equivalent of Ovid's 'What shoulders, what arms did I see – and touch! How suited for caress the form of her breasts! How smooth her body beneath the faultless bosom! What a long and beautiful side! How youthfully fair a thigh!', 19-22) instead we find something depersonalised, depicted in unspecific topographical terms: 'a far fairer world' (6), 'your gown going off, such beauteous state reveals | as when from flowery meads th'hill's shadow steals' (13-14), and the famous cartographical evocation of the woman's body as 'O my America, my new found land' (27).⁷¹ This unexpected resistance to *Amores* 1.5, this refusal to display the female body purportedly at the centre of this poem, forces us to re-consider what this text is actually 'about': how can we read this textual rejection of the

⁶⁹ Hadfield (2007) 52-3 disagrees, describing this poem as a blazon.

⁷⁰ Feinstein (1994).

⁷¹ The female body is also figured as landscape in Donne's *Elegy 13: Love's Progress*, 41-72.

Shakespeare's *Venus* similarly offers herself to the reluctant *Adonis* in topographical terms: 'I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer | Feed where thou wilt, on mountain, or in dale', *Venus and Adonis* 231-232.

blazon, the visual representation of a naked female body, and what is at stake in this repudiation?

While the mistress' body is concealed beneath elaborate territorial metaphors, it is the male lover's body which, in contrast to the case of the specific Ovidian and generic elegiac precedents, is displayed in unequivocally sexual terms: 'the foe oft-times having the foe in sight | Is tired of standing though they never fight' (3-4). This exploits the trope of *militia amoris* but here it is not just the idea of courtship which is imagined as a struggle between two lovers (as is the case, for example, in the *Astrophil and Stella*) but the act of love itself is imaged as an act of warfare, an idea we have already seen in *Amores* 1.5. The text merges the witty and sexual language so associated with Donne with a vocabulary of dominance as well as the terms of politics ('foe'). Critically, though, while the text certainly gestures towards the kind of masculine dominance we might expect, it is the sexualised male body which is put on display in line 4, and it is the naked male body which covers and continues to conceal the female at the end of the poem: 'to teach thee, I am naked first, why then | what needst thou have more covering than a man?' (47-48).

So what is happening in this text? The brisk and dominating masculinity of the opening line ('all rest my powers defy', the implied impatience of that repetition of 'come') surrenders to an appropriation of the female imagery of pregnancy ('until I labour, I in labour lie') thus creating a fissure in the textual gendering of the narrator.⁷² The image of being swollen with rampant desire is an explicit reference to the male narrator's sexual arousal, a visible signifier of masculinity, as is made clear in lines 3-4 ('the foe oft-times having the foe in sight | Is tired of standing though they never fight'). But that 'tired' (4), implying both eager sexual impatience and the possibility of an exhausted detumescence, points to an unsettling gender ambiguity. Masculinity is set against varying

⁷² See Harvey (1999) on the way the imagery of childbirth frames this poem; Maus (1993) on Renaissance male poets appropriating imagery of pregnancy and the female body e.g. *Astrophil and Stella* 1 'thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes' (12), and Sidney's dedicatory letter to the 'old' *Arcadia*, 'a young head... having many many fancies begotten in it, if it had not been in some way delivered, would have grown a monster'.

opposites: femininity in the pregnancy imagery, emasculation in the potential loss of virility, rendering the narrator disturbingly hermaphroditic in the visual imagery which represents him.⁷³

Discussing Ovid's figure of the hermaphrodite in the Renaissance, Jonathan Bate describes it as the representation of 'complete union', perfect in itself, derived from the myth of unified beings in Plato's *Symposium*.⁷⁴ Golding's translation of Ovid's Hermaphroditus tale, though, tells quite a different story, and one more sensitive to Ovid's text. For both Ovid and Golding, this story is a troubling account of unsettled gender allocation resulting in the closest thing in the *Metamorphoses* to a female rapist.⁷⁵ Significantly for a story which is so centrally about gender, it is the nymph Salmacis who takes on the hunter-voyeur role most usually gendered masculine, and Hermaphroditus, with his 'tender skin' (4.426) and 'naked beauty' (4.427) who becomes the object of her masculinised gaze.⁷⁶ The two do become one but the result, not surprisingly, is not the perfect one which Bate suggests: 'they were not any longer two but, as it were a toy | of double shape. Ye could not say it was a perfect boy | nor perfect wench' (4.468-70), and Hermaphroditus' own lament is for his lost manhood. The text describes him as 'weakened' (4.472), as 'but half a man' (4.473), and when he prays that other men using the spring might also be rendered as tainted as he is, he terms it 'infected' (4.481). Golding's own comment on this story in the 1567 dedicatory epistle describes Hermaphroditus as 'effeminate... weak' (116).

The Hermaphroditus story is one of a struggle for gender dominance rather than a merging of qualities, a dilution of masculinity rather than a unifying and strengthening, and so it is worth considering how these ideas might be present in the hermaphroditic imagery used at the start of 'To His Mistress Going To Bed':

⁷³ Docherty (1986) also reads Donne's love poetry more generally as a struggle between genders.

⁷⁴ Bate (1994) 62; *Symposium* 189a-193d.

⁷⁵ Golding's *Metamorphoses* 4. 352-481.

⁷⁶ There are other instances of this gender inversion in classical myth e.g. Phaedra and Hippolytus, or Venus and Adonis, and the quality which gives these stories their erotic and transgressive charge is precisely this overturning of the expected gender rules of sexual pursuit and the gaze: see Salzman-Mitchell (2005) on gaze theory and the *Metamorphoses*.

to what extent might the myth of Hermaphroditus be a shadow text hidden beneath the surface of Donne's elegy, another version of the loss of masculinity depicted in *Amores* 3.7? Certainly the refusal of the text to visually display the mistress in the way that Corinna is flaunted in *Amores* 1.5 confounds our expectations. The text complicates matters still further by at least partially presenting an overtly sexual view of the male narrator's body which is itself centred on a single body part, and that one which is most closely associated both with masculine potency but also potentially with its opposite, the impotency which haunts *Amores* 3.7.⁷⁷ The fact that it is the narrator's sexually aroused body which is made the object of the gaze in Donne's text serves to render the narrator simultaneously hyper-masculine, a kind of concentrated phallic object, yet also effeminised through his positioning as a fragmented, visualised sexual object, of being looked at in the way women are culturally, and textually, looked at.⁷⁸

Gender disruption also appears later in Donne's elegy in an allusion to the Atalanta and Hippomenes tale which Venus tells Adonis in the *Metamorphoses*. Donne's narrator muses:

Gems which you women use
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,
That when a fool's eye lighteth on a gem,
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them
35-38

In Ovid's text (*Met.* 10.560-707) Atalanta is a huntress who refuses marriage while Hippomenes is, like Hermaphroditus, a beautiful man-boy.⁷⁹ Donne's text adds another twist as he reverses the gender roles: in the myth it is Hippomenes who throws down the golden apples given to him by Venus to distract Atalanta from the race and, thus, to win her as his wife. Donne's text inverts this story so

⁷⁷ It is worth noting that 3.7 appears in Marlowe's translation of the *Amores* as elegia 6 though Donne would undoubtedly have read Ovid in the original Latin.

⁷⁸ See Vickers (1981) on the Renaissance blazon, Kaplan (1983) on the male gaze.

⁷⁹ Ovid's Venus augments the gender confusion already at play in the text when she describes Atalanta's naked beauty to Adonis as *quale meum, vel quale tuum, si femina fias*, 'such beauty as is mine, or as would be yours if you were a woman' (*Met.* 10.579).

that it is women who distract masculine eyes with their gems. It is men, in Donne's poem, who take on the female role of Atalanta, diverted from their (sexual) course, while women become the Hippomenes figure. The fact that both Atalanta and Hippomenes are themselves already confused in terms of gender markers only adds to the disorder. We should also note the opposition in Donne's text between the gems, the things that are 'theirs', women's, to be coveted, and 'them', women themselves - foregrounding the tension noted earlier between a woman's costume and the woman's body concealed by it.

Donne's text takes issue here with the problematics of vision, so intricately interwoven with the subject of gender: women's gems are displayed by them in a self-protective gesture to ward off the sexually possessive and penetrative male gaze just as, earlier in the poem, the 'spangled breastplate' serves as armour to deflect 'th' eyes of busy fools' (8). The mistress' clothing and ornaments become contested objects which serve to conceal her body from the multitude of male eyes while simultaneously revealing it to her male lover, so that the act of sexual seeing is itself a triumph of masculinity articulated in terms of competition against other men. To confirm this, the text proceeds to liken clothed women to 'books' gay coverings made | for laymen' (39-40) while their unclothed bodies are 'mystic books, which only we... must see revealed' (41-43). That 'must' (43), however, disrupts the confidence of the claim and opens up a space between what ought to be the case – that the lover alone should see his mistress unclothed – and a potential other reality which might have her revealing her body to his male rivals. The insistence on her clothing as a form of protective armour serves to separate the privileged lover from other men thus confirming his possessive masculinity which is itself dependent on refusing other men a sight of his mistress. This authoritative position, however, is intensely vulnerable since any display of the mistress' body to competitor male eyes will serve to damage the lover's own masculinity, undermining the exclusive visual power upon which it is partially reliant.

The correlation between absolute possession of the female body and secure masculine status is foregrounded in the imperial metaphor of mistress as new world territory: 'O my America, my new found land | my kingdom safeliest when with one man manned' (27-28).⁸⁰ The male lover is figured as a colonist not just appropriating her body to himself but enhancing his rank and position, turning himself into a king through his possession of a 'kingdom' (28).⁸¹ But the sense of conquest is irrevocably linked with an awareness of the fragility of this state: the security of his 'kingdom' can only be protected by the exclusion of other men, and the repetition of 'man manned' (28) reiterates the association between possession and masculinity. Turning the female body into metaphorical geographical territory is an attempt to make her akin to property, a commodity which can be legally owned ('where my hand is set, my seal shall be', 32), in a way in which a mistress, perhaps, cannot be, being instead a possession with the inherent power to undermine the status of its purported owner. The awed and confident voice of ownership within the text ('my mine of precious stones, my empery | how blessed am I in this discovering thee!', 29-30) co-exists with a consciousness of its own vulnerability based on the slippery and inconstant nature of women, not least within Donne's other elegies as well as their Latin precedents.⁸²

The anxiety of masculinity articulated in sublimated form in this poem leads us back to the busk of line 11 which the narrator says 'I envy | that still can be, and still can stand so nigh'.⁸³ The busk is a phallic object ('straight, erect and hard') made of a rigid material such as whalebone, ivory or wood, used to stiffen a woman's bodice or corset.⁸⁴ The fear, however wittily expressed by the narrator, is that unlike the 'happy busk', which remains consistently erect despite its nearness to the mistress, his own body might let him down in proximity to

⁸⁰ On this poem as a critique of the English imperial project, see Hester (1987), Young (1987).

⁸¹ Cf. *The Anniversary* where the lovers 'prince enough in one another be' (14).

⁸² e.g. *Elegy 3*, *Elegy 5*; also 'The Apparition' in *Songs and Sonnets*.

⁸³ On anxiety as an intrinsic component of masculinity in this period see Breitenberg (1996); more recently, Simons (2011) has argued against anxiety as a condition of patriarchy.

⁸⁴ For images of Renaissance busks see Feinstein (1994), quotation from 68.

what he most desires. The text returns a number of times to this image of male arousal: the 'standing... foe' of line 4, the busk of line 11, and lines 21-24 when the difference between 'ill spirits' and 'angels' can be seen in the response of the male body as 'those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright' (24). The almost obsessive repetition of this image of masculine potency simultaneously contains within it the insidious reminder of impotency: both the failure of masculine bodily virility which does not have the permanent capacity of the 'happy busk', and the helpless absence of arousal such as might be caused by the 'evil sprite' of line 23 which only sets a man's hairs upright.

To press this idea further, Sandy Feinstein points out that the busk and corset were, in the late sixteenth-century, thought to have the potential to make women look more like men as they served to flatten their breasts and stomach.⁸⁵ It was also feared that they might act as a form of contraception, preventing women from getting pregnant because of the pressure on, and restriction of, their bodies, or even bring on abortions thereby promoting female sexual promiscuity free from the threat of pregnancy.⁸⁶ The busk, then, functions not just as a visual signifier of physical masculinity but also as a cultural symbol for the threat of women appropriating masculine looks as well as masculine sexual morals. It is a subtle form of cross-dressing that confuses the physical differentiation of male and female. Within the context of Donne's poem, it hints that the hermaphroditic imagery noted in relation to the narrator might also encompass the mistress, turning her into a disturbingly androgynous figure. Importantly, however, the text strips the woman, or at least wishes to, of precisely this masculine attribute ('off with that happy busk', 11) which might itself be seen as a gesture towards 'correcting' and reasserting a more conventional gender differentiation.

Nevertheless, the implicit comparison with the eternally erect busk brings to our attention the potential for failure and impotence on the part of the male body, and is, therefore, the source of the narrator's explicit 'envy' (11). The

⁸⁵ Feinstein (1994) 66.

⁸⁶ Feinstein (1994) 66.

mistress' busk functions as a form of portable masculinity which might be assumed or discarded at will. Within the poem, it is the narrator's command that the busk be removed thus eliminating any potential for competition even while acknowledging the busk as a possible substitute for the male lover himself.⁸⁷

Nashe's *Choice of Valentines* offers a suggestive context within which to situate Donne's elegy since Nashe's text also takes these themes of masculine anxiety and potential phallic substitutes and builds an entire semi-obscene, comic narrative around them. Indeed, its alternative manuscript title, *Nashes Dildo*, locates these issues right at the centre of the text.⁸⁸

Set in a city brothel ('an house of venerie', 24), the *Choice of Valentines* recounts the stages of an extended and explicit amorous encounter between the male narrator, Tomalin, and his prostitute lover 'Mistris Francis' (56). Written in a bawdier erotic register than the Donne text, Nashe's poem indulges the reader with a detailed description of the heroine's sexual parts:

A prettie rysing wombe without a weame,
 That shone as bright as anie silver streame;
 And bare out lyke the bending of an hill,
 At whose decline a fountaine dwelleth still;
 That hath his mouth besett with uglie bryars,
 Resembling much a duskie nett of wyres;
 109-114⁸⁹

Topographical imagery for the female body ('silver streame', 'hill') links this to Donne's description of the mistress but Nashe's text has no qualms about the

⁸⁷ Cf. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in which Venus wishes that she had a tusk like the boar ('had I been toothed like him', 1117) which would allow her to penetrate Adonis in the way that the animal does.

⁸⁸ Of the six extant manuscript copies of Nashe's poem, one gives the title as *Nashes Dildo* (Folger MS Va 399, fols. 53v-57) and one *Nashe His Dildo* (Bodleian MS Rawl.poet.216): see Moulton (1997, 2000:188). The first printed edition of Nashe's text in 1899 gave it the title *The Choice of Valentines or The Merie Ballad of Nashe His Dildo*: McKerrow (1958) 400.

⁸⁹ All quotations from the *Choice of Valentines* are taken from McKerrow (1958). Nashe's use of *Amores* 1.5 can be seen from line 107 where 'weam' meaning 'wen' or a spot or blemish recalls Corinna's description at *Amores* 1.5.18, *in toto nusquam corpora menda fuit*, 'nowhere on all her body was sign of fault'; 'Wen' is the word used for *menda* in Christopher Marlowe's translation of *Am.* 1.5: 'not one wen in her body could I spy'.

explicitness of what he is describing.⁹⁰ Nashe's use of *Amores* 1.5 can also be traced from line 109 where 'weame' meaning 'wen' or a spot or blemish recalls Corinna's description at *Amores* 1.5.18, *in toto nusquam corpora menda fuit*, 'nowhere on all her body was sign of fault'.⁹¹ 'Wen' is the word used for *menda* in Christopher Marlowe's translation of *Amores* 1.5: 'not one wen in her body could I spy', though Nashe certainly read Ovid in the original Latin as well.⁹²

As the poem progresses, it seems that it is the details and specificities of Francis' erotic charms which crucially overwhelm her male lover, paralysing him rather than inciting him to perform:

It makes the fruites of love eftsoone be rype,
And pleasure pluckt too tymelie from the stemme
To dye ere it hath seene Ierusalem.
O Gods, that ever anie thing so sweete,
So suddenlie should fade awaie and fleete.
Hir armes are spread, and I am all unarm'd
Lyke one with Ovids cursed hemlock charm'd
(119-24)

The connection between female attractions explicitly described and the male lover's phallic inadequacies is made graphically clear so that it is precisely the blatant and quasi-pornographic nature of the textual description which serves to emasculate the lover ('I am all unarm'd', 121). 'Unarm'd' recalls both the 'foe' of Donne's elegy as well as the more pervasive imagery of elegiac *militia amoris*. *Amores* 3.7 is explicitly recalled both where 'Ovid' describes his failed and paralysed body: *tacta tamen veluti gelida mea membra cicuta*, 'my body, as if drugged with chill hemlock' (13), and in the imagery of the drooping rose

⁹⁰ See also above on the topographical imagery of Shakespeare's Venus.

⁹¹ Crewe (1982) reads Nashe's description as the loss of 'an ideal pastoral order' (48) and links this description to Ovid as a point where pastoral 'resurfaces' in an urban brothel (49): this is a rather strange reading as the closest thing to pastoral in Ovid are the numerous rapes in the *Metamorphosis*.

⁹² See above on Nashe's Latin quotations from Ovid.

(*languidiora rosa*, 3.7.66) in Nashe's 'pluckt too tymelie from the stemme' (120).⁹³

By placing Nashe's text beside Donne's, we can clarify one of the reasons why Donne's narrator refuses to articulate a frank and uninhibited description of his mistress' naked body, and instead veils it in metaphor ('O my America, my new found land'), in 'white linen' (45) and, finally, masks it with his own body (48). The fear of sexual failure, as represented by Nashe's Tomalin, appears to be staved off by the narrator's poetic distraction, and masculinity is maintained by obscuring overwhelming female charms beneath textual extravagance and ornament. The linguistic lavishness and expansiveness of Donne's text serve not just a literary purpose but also a narrative one, that of displacing the narrator's sexual fervour ('until I labour, I in labour lie') and allowing him a sense of sexual control, a quality which is itself gendered masculine.

In the face of Tomalin's sexual failure, Francis, in Nashe's text, does not hide her disappointment and, like the *puella* of 3.7, resorts to manual stimulation: 'Unhappie me, quoth shee, and wilt' not stand? | Com, lett me rubb and chafe it with my hand' (131-2). In an unexpected departure from the Ovidian precedent, she succeeds in rousing her lover. The act of intercourse proceeds with great gusto ('now high, now lowe, now stryking short and thick; | now dyving deepe, he toucht hir to the quick', 147-8), but the narrator's pride in his prowess is short-lived and, with the plea 'but what so firme, that maie continue

⁹³ Nashe's text also draws on *Priapea* 4, another impotence poem, from the *Appendix Vergiliana*. The *Appendix* was problematically attributed to Virgil in the sixteenth century: from Donatus' Life it was believed that the *Priapea* were *opuscula*, 'minor or early works' of Virgil but Aldus Manutius printed the appendix poems separately from the other works in 1517, and Joseph Scaliger created the *Appendix* in 1572. The 1570 collected works of Virgil printed in England included the *Appendix*; and the testament of John Stockward who complained about the 'horrible beastliness of Priapus joined to the end of every Virgil' in 1579 are evidence that the *Appendix* and specifically the *Priapea* poems were commonly available even in English schools (see Introduction); see Reeve in Reynolds (1983) 322-3, Reynolds & Wilson (1991) 118, Kallendorf (2007a) 9.191, Burrow (2008), Ziolkowski & Putnam (2008) 17, Wilson-Okamura (2010) 108-09, Wallace (2011) 9. On sixteenth-century writings on impotence, see Moulton (1997) 70-72, 177; on *Amores* 3.7 being mediated for Nashe via Maximianus' 6th century CE elegy 5, see Stapleton (1995), and Uden & Fielding (2010) who quote and translate the text; on an English 'tradition' of impotence poems continuing into the seventeenth century with e.g. Rochester's 'An Imperfect Enjoyment' and Aphra Behn's 'The Disappointment', see Bohrer (1989), Lyne (2002); also Kuin & Prescott (2000) on the European Priapus tradition.

ever?’ (178), he is forced to bring the encounter to an unexpectedly rushed end, despite his lover’s entreaties that he continue. Francis is not, however, completely dependent on the untrustworthy male body, that ‘faint-hearted instrument of lust’ (235). She has a substitute ready, ‘my little dilldo’ (239) which ‘stands as stiff as he were made of steele’ (242). Taking her own pleasure, she gloats at the way the penis substitute ‘usurps’ (249) ‘poore Priapus’ (247) ‘in bed and bowre | and undermine’s thy kingdom everie howre’ (249-50).

Despite the narrative arc, this is not a poem which celebrates or is even interested in female sexual autonomy or pleasure: instead it offers graphic images of the female body in positions designed to give voyeuristic sexual gratification to its primarily male readers.⁹⁴ At the same time, beneath the surface bawdy, it tells a potent ‘warning story’ of what happens to masculinity when women are allowed to possess a phallic surrogate of their own. The notion of the emasculated male becomes intimately entangled with the masculinised female so that the hermaphroditic imagery encompasses both, and one transgressively gendered position is caused by, and matched with, the other. Nashe’s Francis is masculinised not just by her ownership of the ‘dilldo’ which makes her male lover obsolete but by her ambiguously gendered name, the description of her ‘mannely thigh’ (103), and a strange use of ‘his’ in the description of her ‘wombe’: ‘that hath his mouth besett with uglie briars’ (113).⁹⁵

The textual interactions between Ovid’s *Amores*, Nashe’s *Choice of Valentines* and Donne’s elegy offer reasons for both Donne’s narrator’s sexual ‘envy’ of his lover’s busk as well as his command that she discard it. The ‘kingdom’ (28) which the narrator of Elegy 2 wants to possess exclusively, the *regna* which ‘Ovid’ achieves but is unable to exploit (*quo regna sine usu*, 3.7.49), is endangered by Nashe’s Francis and her sexual toy which ‘undermines thy

⁹⁴One of the extant manuscripts seems to have been owned by a woman, Margaret Bellasys, (BL.MS Add.10309, fols.135v-139v) and in this version Nashe’s poem ends before the dildo appears so for that female reader the text is remade as a story about female sexual frustration rather than one which centres on male anxiety about phallic substitutes: see Moulton (2000) 190-192.

⁹⁵See Boehrer (1989) on the gender ambiguity of the name Francis/Frances as used in this period; Evans (1993) on both forms appearing in the manuscript tradition.

kingdom' (250). The shadow of *Amores* 3.7 threatens the outcome of Donne's text just as *Amores* 1.5 protects and endorses it.

So the Donne and Nashe texts read here each encompass both *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7, and merge them into a single poem; and each of these poems incorporates the two postures of elegy, encoded via extended ideas of 'hard' and 'soft'. Donne's poem maintains the unobjectionable diction of Ovid, keeping it within the bounds of what modern scholars have called the 'erotic' without crossing over into the so-called 'pornographic' of Nashe's poem, but these are clearly problematic categories to apply retrospectively whether to Roman or to early modern texts.⁹⁶

What we can say, though, is that these texts themselves appear to be testing the boundaries of how far they are able to go, what is culturally authorised in poetry, or a certain type of poetry, and where the limits might be reached. *Amores* 1.5 dwells on the eroticised description of Corinna's body, but then coyly looks away when it comes to the actual sexual engagement: *cetera quis nescit*, 'the rest, who does not know?' (1.5.25). 'To His Mistress Going To Bed' teases the reader and flirts with his or her expectations but settles on an absence where the eroticised description of the female body 'ought' to be. The *Choice of Valentines* takes the opposite stance and outdoes Ovid making its sexual description explicit. From the dedicatory proem the text states that it is a 'verse of loose unchastitie' (Proem, 5) and that it will be 'painting forth the things that hidden are | since all men acte what I in speache declare' (Proem, 6-7). The epilogue, too, returns to this question of how far poetry might go: 'yett Ovids wanton Muse did not offend. | He is the fountain whence my streames doe flowe' (Epilogue, 4-5). Nashe, of course, knew quite well that Ovid's poetry did apparently transgress unstated rules and that he was exiled from Rome: the fictional 'evidence' of Ovid's own poetry claims the cause to be a 'carmen' as

⁹⁶ On the problematisation of these categories for both periods see Franz (1972, 1989), El-Gabalawy (1976), Findlen (1993), Clarke (1998, 2003), Talvacchia (1999), Moulton (2000); Merrix (1986), however, unproblematically distinguishes 'soft-core' Ovidian erotics from the 'hard-core' poetics of the *Choice of Valentines*.

well as an 'error'.⁹⁷ Since Ovid's exile was a central component of his persona in the sixteenth century, this statement by Nashe has to be read as a disingenuous and deliberately provocative one.⁹⁸ Nashe appears to be defending himself with the dubious authority of Ovid, but he is also speaking against the cultural idea that poetry should be moral, that it should 'teach and delight', an idea we have already seen being debated by Philip Sidney's texts in the previous chapter.

The *Choice of Valentines* exceeds the boundaries of, and extends, *Amores* 3.7: where Ovid's poem leaves the *puella* frustrated, Nashe's text allows her to achieve her own sexual satisfaction ultimately without the use of a male body at all, rendering Tomalin not just impotent but unnecessary. The 'dilldo' thus operates both as a move away from 3.7, taking it into new territory, and as an extension of its reasons for anxiety. The covert disquiet about the ever-erect busk evinced in 'To His Mistress Going To Bed' is made overt, and is proved to be scarily (if comically) accurate: Tomalin is too easily displaced by a woman with her own phallic substitute.

So these texts by Donne and Nashe re-work issues of sexual power and impotence already present in Ovid. At the same time, they demonstrate a more specific disquiet, even dissent, concerning gender which may register as a contemporary 1590s resonance centred on problematic issues concerning female autonomy and empowerment. Written and in circulation in c.1593, during the final troubled phase of Elizabeth I's 45 year reign, it is possible to read these texts as having political overtones concerned with ideas of masculine hegemony, female power and the contestation of authority.⁹⁹ The next section looks at how these ideas are put to work in the Donne and Nashe texts and then returns to *Amores* 1.5 to read the politicised back into that poem.

⁹⁷ *Tristia* 2.207; on Ovid's exile poetry, see Williams (1994). Donaldson (2011) 75 on the *Tristia* on the English school curriculum.

⁹⁸ On Ovid and exile in the medieval and Renaissance periods, Lyne (2002), Hexter (2002).

⁹⁹ On the political overtones of gender and authority in the 1590s, see Guibbory (1990), Frye (1993), Levin (1994), Montrose (1996, 2006), Villeponteaux (1998), Walker (1998), Betts (1998), Strong (1999), Moulton (2000) 178, Doran (2003b), Brown (2004), Hackett (2008).

3.2 'O my America, my new found land': re-reading Ovid's Corinna through Donne and Nashe

On June 1st 1599 John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, issued an order to the Stationers' Company that 'noe Satyres or Epigramms be printed hereafter'.¹⁰⁰ Known as the Bishops' Ban, this edict led to the confiscation and burning of books which included Marlowe's translation of the *Amores*, verse satires by John Marston and John Davies, the published pamphlets in the public quarrel between Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe, and all of Nashe's other works.¹⁰¹ The *Choice of Valentines*, having never been printed, escaped the ban.

This was not the first time that Nashe had found himself in trouble with the authorities. In 1597 he had written the first act of a play called the *Isle of Dogs* and left it with the theatrical company, Pembroke's Men, with whom he was working.¹⁰² Ben Jonson completed the play, and it was performed for the first and only time in July 1597 before being suppressed by the Privy Council at the request of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London.¹⁰³ Ben Jonson was arrested and thrown into the Marshalsea. Nashe's rooms were searched and he only evaded prison by fleeing London for Norfolk.¹⁰⁴ Sadly, the play was destroyed, but it seems to have been a political satire attacking the Elizabethan court and its institutions such as the Privy Council.¹⁰⁵ The instructions given by the Privy Council to Richard Topcliffe were to trace those responsible for this

¹⁰⁰ Riggs (1989) 56, Shapiro (2005) 153-4, Donaldson (2011) 153, Potter (2012) 242.

¹⁰¹ Shapiro (2005) 153-4 lists the works covered by the ban.

¹⁰² Potter (2012) 232: Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, was married to Mary Sidney, sister to Philip Sidney, and the subject of the next chapter. He was patron of Pembroke's Men during the 1590s.

¹⁰³ McKerrow (1958) 30, Riggs (1989) 32, Donaldson (2011) 109-115, Potter (2012) 232.

¹⁰⁴ Riggs (1989) 32, Donaldson (2011) 109-115.

¹⁰⁵ Donaldson (2011) 117-122 speculates that it was 'an ironic mirror of the idealized world of Elizabeth's court', and that it was repeatedly described as seditious and slanderous because it was libellous of members of the Privy Council and, possibly, Elizabeth herself. It might also have alluded to the volatile relationship between the Earl of Essex and the Cecils who were members of the Privy Council. Potter (2012) 232 agrees and adds that islands were associated with satire e.g. Thomas More's *Utopia*, and were particularly apposite for political allegory centred on England. The *OED* gives 'dog' as a term of abuse at this time (5a) indicating a worthless or contemptible person.

‘lewd plaie... contaynge very seditious and sclanderous matter’, and ensure that the ‘leude and mutinous behaviour’ of the players be punished.¹⁰⁶ When the case against Ben Jonson was heard on 15th August 1597, the play was again described as ‘containing very seditious and scandalous matter’.¹⁰⁷

The *Isle of Dogs*, written in part by Nashe, provides a suggestive context through which to read the earlier *Choice of Valentines*. Both texts could be read as showing a rebellious stance towards forms of authority: explicitly political power and influence in the case of the play; a more generalised engagement with the way in which literature and gender may be put to contested and subversive use in the poem. The *Choice of Valentines* has been described as an ‘anti-Petrarchan’ poem which disrupts the neo-Platonic underpinning of that mode of writing, and re-locates itself in a city brothel, the site of ‘(relatively) autonomous women’.¹⁰⁸ As many scholars have noted, Petrarchan tropes were widely appropriated to structure the Elizabethan court, facilitating female rule while allowing both the servitude of male courtiers and an insistence on the chastity of the monarch.¹⁰⁹ Contesting the Petrarchan, then, as Nashe does, has decisive and, possibly, scandalous politicised overtones.

The *Choice of Valentines* also, as we have seen, upsets the authority of Ovid’s poem, turning 3.7 from a poem of frustration into one of female usurpation of masculine prerogatives and resultant sexual satisfaction.¹¹⁰ The poem sanctions female empowerment but only at the cost of masculine hegemony. It thus seems to give local expression to a wider cultural anxiety about the rightful hierarchy of gender which is especially potent given the presence of a female monarch on the English throne. The ‘kingdom’ which is at

¹⁰⁶ The letter is quoted in McKerrow (1958) 29; see also Nicholl (1984) 244. The *OED* gives ‘lewd’ as both lascivious (7) as well as wicked or worthless (5 and 6), and linked to the idea of sedition or mutiny, both of which had the meanings of revolt or rebellion that they have today.

¹⁰⁷ Donaldson (2011) 113.

¹⁰⁸ Moulton (2000) 168 on the anti-Petrarchan, quotation from 171.

¹⁰⁹ On Petrarchism at the Elizabethan court, see e.g. Marotti (1982), Berry (1989), Guibbory (1990), Frye (1993), Doran & Freeman (2003a); on its transgression, Betts (1998), Walker (1998).

¹¹⁰ The Margaret Bellasys manuscript mentioned above seems to return Nashe’s text to the Ovidian precedent, as do the Dyce and Rosenbach manuscripts: see Moulton (2000) 189.

stake in Donne's poem is destabilised by Francis and her portable 'penis' which 'undermine's thy kingdom everie howre' (250).

A brief return to Donne's elegy may be instructive here. A number of scholars have particularly drawn attention to correlations between Elizabeth's natural or physical body, her body as political entity and Donne's metaphor of his mistress' body as America: an implicit, though unverballed, association with Virginia, both geographical territory and itself a kind of hallucinatory vision of the queen's virgin body.¹¹¹ The language of sovereignty and exploration is part of a discourse of power articulated in the poem but control, authority and supremacy shift within Donne's text in suggestive ways. Only the queen and her government had the power to authorise ('licence', 25) 'rovers', government-sponsored privateers like Raleigh and Drake, and the movement of the text takes the male lover from the position of a man seeking patronage and permission ('licence my roving hands, 25') to the possessor of the authorising female body. 'My mine of precious stones, my empery' (29) with its insistent double possession ('my mine') at the start of the line makes it clear that the power dynamic has altered and that the sovereign has become the colonised. The shift from female to male authority is completed as 'where my hand is set, my seal shall be' (32) where the act of sealing up the female body through sexual consummation is also figured as taking control of the Great Seal of England, and putting it back under male control. The female body of Donne's text thus becomes an index of politicised power as well as masculinity, as the lover moves from suppliant to imperial conqueror. The fantasy enacted by the text is not simply an erotic one, but also one which enables the almost treasonous political usurpation of female rule and the restoration of male authority.¹¹²

So both Donne's and Nashe's texts can be read as having a politicised overlay. They use Ovid's representations of sexual encounters in *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7 to articulate transgressive ideas about gender hierarchies, imperial politics,

¹¹¹ Young (1987), Hester (1987), Labriola (1996); Montrose (2006) 115-117 discusses the wider geopolitical imagery associated with the queen's body.

¹¹² Hester (1987) and Young (1987) also read this poem as a critique of Elizabethan imperialism, and as a poem with hidden political and religious agendas.

and the political appropriation of Petrarchism at the Elizabethan court. They employ Ovid, in other words, to enable an engagement with the pressing concerns and anxieties of elite, educated, sophisticated and relatively young men (and, possibly, some women) in 1590s England. But can we, following Martindale, read these concerns back into Ovid's texts, 'unlocking' fresh interpretations? If the male and female bodies in Nashe and Donne are inscribed with issues of contested authorities and political mythologising, then how might we re-read Ovid? It is certainly not new to detect the 'political commitments' of Ovid's poetry.¹¹³ As Alison Sharrock says, 'the entire Ovidian corpus is in dialogue with the most powerful contemporary signifiers of the masculine order: Augustus, *arma...* and political life'.¹¹⁴ Picking up on the earlier discussion of how Corinna in *Amores* 1.5 is associated with the idea of epiphany, and is depicted as being like a perfect work of visual art, the next section argues that the natural correlation would be with Venus, specifically statues of Venus, thus allowing a covert dialogue with the political myths which support, and are proliferated by, the Augustan regime.

The literary tradition of men who desire statues, and for whom statues come to life, particularly statues of Aphrodite or Venus, is a long one.¹¹⁵ The classic case in antiquity is the famous story of the man who fell in love with Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Cnidos.¹¹⁶ So enamoured was he that he contrived to be locked in the temple overnight with the statue. By morning, when the temple was unlocked, the physical evidence of his passion was clear to see from the stains on the marble: and Aphrodite herself was so offended that she punished

¹¹³ Habinek (2002), quotation from 46; also Davis (1999, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Sharrock (2002c) 102.

¹¹⁵ Sharrock (2002b), Hersey (2009); also Vout (2007) on the erotic power of statues.

¹¹⁶ Praxiteles was a 4th century BCE Athenian artist and the story of his Aphrodite is recounted in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* 7.127. See Havelock (1995) on the Aphrodite of Cnidos, also Sharrock (2002b), Skinner (2005) 172-176, Elsner (2007a, 2007b), Hersey (2009), Blanchard (2010) 22-24 on the Cnidia, 28-33 on Pygmalion and falling in love with statues, Squire (2011) chapter 3 on the Cnidia and her legacy. The Christian writer Clement of Alexandria (c.150-216) wrote on the idolatry of men falling in love with pagan statues: see Blanchard (2010) 29. There is a medieval version of Venus's statue coming to life in William of Malmsebury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (1125): see Reid (1993) 159.

the man by sending him mad.¹¹⁷ Roman copies of the Cnidia from around the first century BCE show her standing in a classic *pudica* (modest) pose with one hand covering her pubic area and the other (sometimes) over her breasts.¹¹⁸ While this gesture shows the goddess screening her body against the invasive gaze of the viewer of whom she seems acutely aware, it also draws attention precisely to what is supposedly concealed, not surprising given that this is a representation of the goddess of sexual love. The function of Corinna's half-open tunic in 1.5.9 may be read as parallel to that of Venus' hands, drawing attention to a comparison between the goddess and 'Ovid's' view of Corinna. Roman statues of Venus from around the first century BCE frequently showed her veiled by sheer drapery making the likeness even closer.¹¹⁹

Praxiteles was said to have modelled his Aphrodite on his mistress, the courtesan Phryne (who is mentioned in Propertius 2.6), so that the story, at least from Pliny's time, and almost certainly earlier too, blurred the two categories of women – courtesan/mistress and goddess – into a single figure.¹²⁰ Corinna too, along with Cynthia and Tibullus' Delia, has sometimes been seen by modern scholars as a Hellenised courtesan, and comparisons have been drawn between the mistresses of elegy and nude statues of Venus.¹²¹ In a Hellenistic source for the Pygmalion story, the statue was not just brought to life with the support of

¹¹⁷ Erasmus edited Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* in the early sixteenth century: see Reynolds & Wilson (1991) 162. Philemon Holland's 1601 translation of this episode from Pliny is rather shyly circumspect: 'he [Praxiteles] devised his memorial by making one image of Venus, for the Gnidians, so lively, that a certain young man became so amorous of it, that he doted for love therof, and went beside himselfe'.

¹¹⁸ See Havelock (1995), Stewart (2003) 41, 91-110, Skinner (2005) 174. Titian's Venus of Urbino (c.1538), modelled on a courtesan, is shown in the same *pudica* pose. On the re-discovery of classical statuary in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Rome, see Barkan (1999), also Rubin (2000) 30-31; Reid (1993) catalogues other appearances of Venus in Renaissance art.

¹¹⁹ Pliny's *Natural History* 35.156 describes a 5th century BCE Athenian bronze of a veiled Aphrodite which was much copied in Rome. The Roman Aphrodite of Frejus, now in the Louvre, is of this type, and is dated to the first century BCE. See Stewart (2003) on Roman statues in general; 91-110 on the typology and limited repertoire of Venus statues.

¹²⁰ Havelock (1995) 3, Skinner (2005) 172-176, Morales (2011) on Phryne and ecphrasis. Donne writes an epigram to Phryne, a testament to her presence in the Renaissance. On Raphael using his mistress as a model for his Madonnas, see Mahon (2005) 29, and on courtesans generally being depicted as goddesses in Italian Renaissance paintings see Kemp et al. (2007) 28.

¹²¹ Havelock (1995) 117-124 on elegiac mistresses and Venus statues as 'analogues' of each other (117); James (2001, 2003) on the elegiac mistress as courtesan.

Venus, as is the case in Ovid's version, but was actually a cult image of the goddess.¹²² Ovid's ecstatic catalogue of Corinna's physical flawlessness (*in tota nusquam corpore menda fuit*, 'nowhere on all her body was sign of fault', 1.5.18) thus enables a textual slippage between elegiac mistress, perfect artistic artefact, and Venus, the archetype of the transcendent eroticised female body.

Later poems in the *Amores* make Corinna an explicit analogue to Venus: in 1.7 when 'Ovid' hits her, the violence is likened to Diomedes' attack on Aphrodite as she carries Aeneas from the battle (*Iliad* 5.330-352): *ille deam primus perculit – alter ego!*, 'he was the first to smite a goddess – I am the second!' (1.7.32).¹²³ And in 2.14, the abortion poem, the narrator contrasts Corinna to Venus: *si Venus Aenean gravida temerasset in alvo / Caesaribus tellus orba futura fuit*, 'If Venus had violated Aeneas in her pregnant belly the future world would have been bereft of Caesars' (2.14.17-18). These mentions of Aeneas, Venus and 'Caesars' are crucial markers of how these texts engage obliquely with Augustan mythologizing about the foundation of Rome. Of particular importance to our reading of 1.5 is the Augustan regime's use of the myth of the Julian family springing from Venus to support its legitimacy.¹²⁴ Reading back from Donne and Nashe to Ovid with a careful eye for the political mythologising of female bodies, and an active engagement with the sexual politics of a ruling administration proves a productive way to re-orient *Amores* 1.5.

¹²² Solodow (1988) 215-19 traces the story to Philostrephanus, a friend or pupil of Callimachus: now lost, this original had Pygmalion as the king of Cyprus having sex with a cult statue of Aphrodite. In Ovid's *Pygmalion*, Venus attends the wedding since she acknowledges her own role in creating the marriage (*coniugo, quod fecit, adest dea*, *Met.* 10.295) but whether she is also a source of inspiration for the statue is never explicitly stated. Sharrock (1991) reads Ovid's *Pygmalion* episode as an archetype of elegiac gender and power relations.

¹²³ See Reid (1993) 112 on Roman Venus becoming linked to the prior cult of Aphrodite.

¹²⁴ See DeRose Evans (1992) 36-52 on the Aeneas myth in Roman 'propaganda'; also Rose (1998) on the Roman political use of the Trojan legend: Aeneas was recognised as the ancestor of the Roman people from the third century BCE, and Troy was officially designated Rome's 'mother city' by the Senate in 188 BCE (408); 409-10 on the appropriation by the Julian family of the Trojan story and, especially, their descent from Venus: Augustus 'stressed his Trojan ancestry more forcefully than any other Roman before him' (409).

The *Amores* would not be the only Augustan text to interrogate the political appropriation of Venus.¹²⁵ The *Aeneid*, a central Augustan text to which we will presently return, embeds Venus at its heart as the mother of Aeneas and, hence, the future Julian family through his son Ascanius/Iulus.¹²⁶ Julius Caesar claimed descent from the goddess and dedicated a temple to Venus Genetrix in 46 BCE.¹²⁷ Visual representations of the goddess and her cult worship were an important part of Augustus' 'revival' of Rome after the bitter years of civil war.¹²⁸ The Forum Augustum, especially, with its statuary of Venus and Aeneas was a crucial monument of political myth-making.¹²⁹ Reliefs in the temple of Mars Ultor (Mars the Avenger) in the forum seem to have featured cult groups including Mars and Venus, often with Cupid.¹³⁰ Along the sides of the forum, too, were stone processions of Romans, the *summi viri*, 'best or greatest men', including Aeneas, his father Anchises, and the Julii family.¹³¹ At the centre was a statue of Augustus in a war chariot labelled *pater patriae*, 'father of the country'. The whole construction was a magnificent visual narrative, 'unrelentingly didactic', that positioned Augustus as the inevitable, legitimate and rightful leader of

¹²⁵ See Johnson (1996) on Venus in the *Metamorphoses*.

¹²⁶ On the mythological genealogy see *Aen.* 1.266-279; also Livy 1.3.

¹²⁷ Weinstock (1971) 80-90 on Julius Caesar's appropriation of the cult of Venus, 82 on the dedication of the temple in the Forum, 84 on the epithet 'genetrix' not having been given to Venus or any other goddess before

¹²⁸ On the history of the civil wars and the victory of Augustus see Syme (1939), Galinsky (1996).

¹²⁹ Work on the Forum started after Actium in 31 BCE, and it was dedicated in 2 BCE: Zanker (1990) 79, Galinsky (1996) 197-213. On the architecture and monuments of Augustan Rome, Zanker (1990), Galinsky (1996), Kellum (1997) on the Forum Augustum; for Augustus' own words on the forum, *Res Gestae* 21. On the complicated status on statues in Roman culture, Stewart (2003), especially their social function which makes them more than merely an 'artistic category' (12).

¹³⁰ See Zanker (1990) 195-201 on the temple of Mars Ultor, also Kellum (1997) 164-81. Cupid's mythological father seems to have traditionally been Mercury rather than Mars but he is sometimes shown in a family grouping with Venus and Mars, famous for their adulterous liaison: e.g. *Od.* 8.266-366. *Am.* 1.10 also refers to their adultery: *Mars quoque deprensus fabrilis vincula sensit; / notior in caelo fabula nulla fuit*, 'Mars, too, was caught, and felt the bonds of the smith; no tale was better known in heavens' (1.10.39-40).

¹³¹ On the statuary in the Forum Augustum and the procession of Romans in *Aen.* 6, see Bartsch (1998) 329, Zanker (1990) 193-5, also Kellum (1997) for a gendered reading of the monuments: 'the Forum of Augustus was a sexually fraught theater for the engendering of the masculine' (168).

Rome, in a line which starts from Venus and Anchises.¹³² By offering a representation of Venus, however indirectly, *Amores* 1.5 sets up not just literary resonances with Virgil's text but also constructs a dialogue with the politics and ideology of Augustus' reign made visible throughout the city.¹³³

As previous scholars have noted, it is reductive to see the Augustan exploitation of visual imagery as merely propaganda, especially as its specific forms did not necessarily originate with Augustus himself.¹³⁴ What we might call Augustanism is 'a product of contestation and dialogue' so that so-called 'anti-Augustan' texts are as 'Augustan' in nature as the political ideology they might superficially appear to reject.¹³⁵ But certainly the use of art, buildings, religious ritual, public ceremony, even the proliferation of visual imagery in Augustan texts such as the *Aeneid* with its extended and numerous ecphrases and visions, are a testament to the primacy of looking and the importance of visual communication under Augustus.¹³⁶ It is against this background that we can read the images of Corinna mobilised in *Amores* 1.5 as an embodiment of Venus.

It has become commonplace to recognise the problematic nature of Venus as founding ancestor of the Romans. While Augustan ideology worked hard to foreground her maternal role as Venus Genetrix, it proved impossible to completely repress her association with unbounded sexuality and disruptive erotic passion, and she remained a metonymy for sexual pleasure.¹³⁷ The adulterous 'family' group of Venus, Mars and Cupid made prominent in the Augustan Forum is especially problematic in relation to Augustus' moral

¹³² See Rose (1924), Barchiesi (1999); on the courtship of Aphrodite and Anchises see the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite discussed below.

¹³³ On the *Amores* as 'political' texts, see Davis (1999, 2006); Merriam (2006a) on Venus in love elegy generally; and Boyle (2003) on Ovid's specific engagement with the monuments of Augustan Rome.

¹³⁴ Zanker (1990) 3, Galinsky (1996).

¹³⁵ Powell (1992) 3, Kennedy (1992) on the instability of 'Augustan' and 'anti-Augustan' as terms of analysis.

¹³⁶ On vision and ecphrases in the *Aeneid*, Putnam (1998), Bartsch (1998), Smith (2005); Feeney (1990) on the tension between speech and vision in the poem.

¹³⁷ e.g. Barchiesi (1997) 26, Skinner (2005) 228-238.

legislation and the attempts to regulate marriage and criminalise adultery.¹³⁸ The laws attempted to re-establish the polarity between '*matrona* and *meretrix*' which had allegedly become somewhat blurred in Roman society, but this is precisely a dichotomy which Venus herself refuses to endorse.¹³⁹ Famed for her liaison with Mars, Venus turns her betrayed consort, Vulcan, into a source of both laughter and scorn. *Amores* 2.5 draws attention to this aspect of Venus when the goddess is figured as a precedent for the unfaithful *puella* giving passionate kisses 'such as Venus bestowed on Mars' (*sed Venerem Marti saepe tulisse suo*, 2.5.28). *Amores* 1.8 claims that 'Venus reigns in the city of her Aeneas' (*at Venus Aeneae regnat in urbe sui*, 1.8.42), a statement which might be read as having positive connotations in terms of Augustan ideology – until we remember that the words are in the mouth of a *lena* (nurse or, in elegy, more probably a brothel owner) who is advising a young girl new to the profession.¹⁴⁰ *Amores* 1.11, too, specifically mentions the temple of Venus (*Veneris... aede*, 1.11.26) when the narrator promises to dedicate his tablets to the goddess if they prove to be successful aids in his acts of seduction.¹⁴¹

So the reign of Venus can be used to either promote or undermine official morality, playing on the complexity of image already invested in Venus, despite attempts to stabilise her as a grave and protecting maternal figure. Returning to *Amores* 1.5, it seems that the multiple interpretations of Corinna that it enables – as human mistress, erotic artwork, statue or even Venus herself – serve as a critique of any attempt to unify the inherently multifaceted nature of Venus and

¹³⁸ In 18 BCE the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* was put forward which regulated and encouraged marriage among the elite classes, and it was followed by the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* which criminalised adultery: see Treggiari (1991) on Roman marriage in general, 60-5. on Augustus' marriage legislation, and 277-80. on the adultery laws; also McGinn (1998) 140-215 on the adultery laws; and Skinner (2005) 206 on Augustus' moral legislation in general.

¹³⁹ Fear (2000) n.7. See chapter 1 on Sallust's Sempronia and Clodia in Cicero's *Pro Caelio* as epitomes of elite female bad behaviour during the late Republic.

¹⁴⁰ On the *lena* in love elegy, Myers (1996), James (2001, 2003). This is another link to the *Choice of Valentines* which takes place in a brothel.

¹⁴¹ Also *Tristia* 2.295-6: *Venerit in magni templum, tua munera, Martis | stat Venus Ultori iuncta*, 'if she enters the temple of mighty Mars, your own gift, Venus stands close to the Avenger': see Edwards (1996) 24-5 on Ovid's 'misreading' of the monuments, and Boyle (2003) on Ovid's 'eroticisation of Rome's topography' (19) as the temples and porticos associated with Augustus become places for erotic pursuit.

narrow it down to a single interpretation. The Ovidian text insists on remaining open, refusing the closure of a defined and uncontested interpretation, and so opposes not just a single meaning for Corinna but combats the process of interpretative closure itself.

Ovid is not alone, however, in problematising Venus: the *Aeneid*, too, allows a disconcertingly disruptive and unruly side of Venus to intrude into a text which appears to be concerned with, amongst other things, the containment of passion and the establishment of order.¹⁴² Venus in her maternal, nurturing and protective role is prominent at the start and end of the poem. When she goes to Jupiter in book 1 she is depicted as saddened (*tristior* 1.229) and with her eyes brimming with tears (*lacrimis oculos suffusa nitentis* 1.229), a sober picture of anxious and vulnerable motherhood. Her concern is not just for her son but for the whole race of Romans who are to spring from his line as rulers (1.230-255) and it is her loving concern which prompts Jupiter's great prophetic speech (1.257-296) of Roman *imperium sine fine*, 'dominion without end' (1.279). In book twelve, too, after Aeneas is wounded in battle, Venus herself fetches herbs from Mount Ida to staunch the wound and take away all his pain (12.411-422). However, after the book one prophecy, in a much discussed episode, Venus' interaction with her son takes on an unsettling flavour which provides a suggestive frame for our reading of *Amores* 1.5.¹⁴³

After the storm Aeneas, with a few of his ships, is washed up on the shore of Carthage. He ventures inland with Achates for companion and is met by his mother *media... silva*, 'amid the forest' (1.314). Faint cross-echoes can be heard between this and the *silvae* of *Amores* 1.5.4 (*quale fere silvae lumen habere*

¹⁴²Merriam (2006a) 110 disagrees, claiming that 'Virgil's Venus, of course, is nothing like the goddess depicted by the love poets'. On gestures towards the containment of passion see, for example, *Aen.* 6 and the doors to the temple of Apollo at Cumae which depict the Cretan labyrinth, itself a symbol for the enclosure of female passion which is represented as monstrous through the figure of the minotaur. Significantly this comes after book 4 in which the gods have led Aeneas to abandon Dido and before the descent into the underworld where he will see the visions of Rome's future leading teleologically to Augustus. On the shield, too, the battle of Actium is depicted as the triumph of order over the chaos of Cleopatra and Antony: on ecphrases as 'parallel texts' (328) to the poem itself see Bartsch (1998), also Putnam (1998).

¹⁴³Reckford (1995), Oliensis (1997b), Leach (1997), Skinner (2005) 228-238.

solent), and the reiteration of forms of *medius* already noted. The intertext with the Odysseus-Nausicaa episode in *Odyssey* 6 is well-established.¹⁴⁴ That encounter, too, takes place in a wood, and the naked Odysseus is dependent on a strategically-held branch to cover his exposed body.¹⁴⁵ Woods are notorious sites in Greek myth for erotic encounters with gods, goddesses, nymphs and satyrs. Aeneas' mother is dressed as a virgin huntress (*virginis os habitumque gerens et virginis arma* 1.315) foregrounding her ironic appropriation of the guise of the chaste followers of Diana as well as prefiguring the first sight of Dido later in the book who is herself likened to Diana (1.498-504).¹⁴⁶ The Virgilian text dwells for eight lines on Venus' appearance and makes her a sensuously enticing figure: 'she had... given her hair to the winds to scatter; her knee bare, and her flowing robes gathered in a knot'.¹⁴⁷ The picture of her undressed hair and semi-covered body recalls and anticipates Corinna's first appearance in *Amores* 1.5.

The Odysseus-Nausicaa encounter is modified in a number of ways in the Virgilian text: the nakedness is transferred from the man to the semi-clothed goddess; Odysseus' likeness to a hungry lion hunting cattle or sheep (*Od.* 6.130-134) is re-written as Venus *venetrix*; Odysseus speaks first in Homer, but in Virgil Venus does *ac prior* (1.321), before Aeneas has the chance to fulfil his Homeric role, and her speech is ambiguously teasing: "*luvenes, monstrate, mearum / vidistis si quam hic errantem forte sororum*, 'tell me, youths, if perhaps you have seen a sister of mine straying here'" (1.321-322). *Errantem*, translated here as 'straying' means to go astray figuratively as well as literally, so 'to stray from the path of virtue'.¹⁴⁸ Given the woodland setting, the idea of a nymph going sexually astray is implicit so Venus' words are both uncomfortably flirtatious in speaking

¹⁴⁴Reckford (1995), Oliensis (1997b), Leach (1997).

¹⁴⁵ 'he went to look for the wood and found it close to the water | in a conspicuous place, and stopped underneath two bushes' (*Od.* 5.476-7). After spotting Nausicaa and her companions playing by the river, 'Great Odysseus came from under his thicket | and from the dense foliage with his heavy hand he broke off | a leafy branch to cover his body and hide the male parts' (6.127-129).

¹⁴⁶ Pach (1987) on Venus, Diana and Dido; also Skinner (2005) 236.

¹⁴⁷ *Venetrix dederatque comam diffundere ventis, | nuda genu nodoque sinus collecta fluentis*, 1.319-20.

¹⁴⁸ *OLD erro* (4) to wander from the course, go astray, (6) 'to stray from the path of virtue'.

to her son, and also foreshadow the consummation of Dido's doomed love for Aeneas which takes place during a hunt.¹⁴⁹

Pre-empted in this way, Aeneas' reply returns to the Homeric model: *o - quam te memorem, virgo? Namque haud tibi vultus / mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat; o dea certe!*, 'but by what name should I call you, o maiden? For your face is not mortal nor has your voice a human ring; o goddess surely!' (1.327-328).¹⁵⁰ The self-conscious and gently erotic flattery of Odysseus, known for his cunning and eloquence, sits uneasily with Aeneas, and is made doubly disturbing by the fact that he really is speaking to a goddess, and that she is his mother.

To compound the disquiet generated by this version of Venus, the Virgilian text is here replaying not just an Odyssean model but also the scene in the Hymn to Aphrodite which recounts the original sexual encounter between Venus and Anchises, Aeneas' father, which resulted in Aeneas' own birth.¹⁵¹ In that text, too, Venus appears as 'an unmarried girl' (82), and Anchises' first words on seeing her are 'hail, lady, whichever of the blessed ones you are that arrive at this dwelling, Artemis or Leto or golden Aphrodite' (92-93).¹⁵² There are further parallels, too, as Anchises promises 'I will build you an altar on a hill top, in a conspicuous place, and make goodly sacrifices to you' (100-101); echoed by Aeneas' 'many a victim shall fall for you at our hand before your altars' (1.334).¹⁵³

In the Hymn, Aphrodite wakes Anchises after their sexual encounter and reveals herself to him as a goddess: 'but when he saw the neck and lovely eyes of Aphrodite he was afraid and averted his gaze' (181-2). He accuses her of deception, 'but you did not tell the truth', and fears his punishment for sleeping with a goddess. The revelation of Venus in the *Aeneid* re-writes this prior text.

¹⁴⁹ *Aen.* 4.129-172.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. 'I am at your knees o queen. But are you mortal or goddess? | If indeed you are one of the gods who hold wide heaven | then I must find in you the nearest likeness to Artemis' (*Od.* 6.149-151).

¹⁵¹ See Barchiesi (1999).

¹⁵² Translations from the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite are from West (2003).

¹⁵³ *Multa tibi ante aras nostra cadet hostia dextra* 1.334. In *Aen.* 12.411-22 when Venus heals the wounded Aeneas, she plucks the herb from Mount Ida, the scene of her seduction of Anchises, so that previous encounter re-appears as a subtext at various points throughout the poem.

Venus, having prepared Aeneas for his meeting with Dido, drops her disguise and one of the indicators of her divinity is her bright rosy neck (*rosea cervice refulsit* 1.402). Then comes an ambiguous line: *pedes vestis defluxit ad imos, / et vera incessu patuit dea*, ‘down to her feet fell her raiment, and in her step she was revealed, a very goddess’ (1.404-405). We have already seen Venus described with her tunic knotted up above her knees and so it is often assumed that her tunic is untied so that it flows down to her feet thus covering her from the knee down in a dignified matron’s pose.

Kenneth Reckford, however, offers a different and intriguing reading: he proposes an understanding of *defluxit* not just as ‘flowed down, descended’ but also as ‘slipped away’ so that the tunic does not flow down from the knee but slides off completely leaving Venus naked to her son’s eyes.¹⁵⁴ The step that then reveals Venus as a goddess is a step out of her clothes, and the revelation is partly a recognition (*adgnovit* 1.406) since Venus, as we have seen, is frequently represented as naked. Aeneas, who fails to recognise the goddess clothed, identifies her immediately once her clothes slip off.

The Hymn to Aphrodite is again recalled here, since Anchises does not just see Venus naked but actually unclothes her himself: ‘he undid her girdle and divested her of her gleaming garments’ (164-5). Aeneas, too, like his father before him, reproaches Venus for her deception, accusing her of mocking him with false words and images: “*quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis / ludis imaginibus? Cur dextrae iungere dextram / not datur ac veras audire et reddere voces?*”, ‘“You are cruel! Why do you mock your son so often with vain phantoms? Why am I not allowed to clasp you hand in hand and hear and utter words unfeigned?”’ (1.407-409).

This reading of the Virgilian Venus undermines the decorous representation of the goddess of Augustan political orthodoxy as the disturbingly eroticised encounter with her son replays a previous sexual engagement with his father, thus subtly associating the goddess with a form of incest. Rather than

¹⁵⁴ OLD (5b) ‘(of clothes) to slip down or off’; Reckford (1995).

appearing as the grave and serious mother of the Roman race, Venus is an acutely problematic maternal figure for Aeneas, and it is significant that this disquieting fissure in the image of the goddess is indicated through an uncertainty over what Aeneas sees. The extended description of Venus' appearance functions like an ecphrasis, and serves as a site of intertextuality, complicating the text.¹⁵⁵

The figure of Venus even in the *Aeneid* is thus seen in a plurality of ways shifting between protective and seductive, grave and frivolous, clothed and naked, mother and virgin, a force for order or for chaos. As is the case in *Amores* 1.5, the single view of Venus Genetrix central to Augustan legitimisation is resisted and contested, and that uncertainty is negotiated through the visual representation of a sexualised female body.

Amores 1.5, then, rather than being a purely private, erotic poem, interacts imaginatively with the visual culture of Ovid's Rome, specifically with erotic visual art, with ecphrastic moments in the *Aeneid*, and with the ideological use of imagery to support Augustan power. This is not, of course, to deny its status as an erotic poem, but the voyeuristic gaze which makes a sexual spectacle of Corinna itself serves to position the text as one which is engaging sceptically with the politicised use of visibility in the Augustan city. Enabling Corinna to be viewed as mistress, courtesan, goddess, perfect art object and even an analogue to Venus herself, the text refuses any form of interpretative closure and remains defiantly open. At the same time, the text draws attention to some ambivalent and deeply problematic moments in the *Aeneid*, just as the *Metamorphoses* will do. By foregrounding the blatant sexuality of Venus-Corinna, *Amores* 1.5 surreptitiously equates 'Ovid' with both Mars and Anchises, and responds in a sly, mischievous way to the Virgilian text and its Homeric predecessors, as well as the attempts of Augustan ideology to delimit the meanings of Venus.

¹⁵⁵ Gaisser (2007b) on ecphrasis as allusion and intertext; on ecphrasis in general, Becker (1995), Putnam (1998), Rogerson (2002), Elsner (2007a, 2007b), *Classical Philology* 102 (2007) special edition on ecphrasis.

Politicised readings of Donne's elegy and Nashe's *Choice of Valentines* thus re-calibrate interpretations of *Amores* 1.5, and offer valuable insights into what appears, on the surface, to be a simple, though slippery, text of an afternoon sexual encounter. All these poems make use of the textual production of a female body to serve as a form of vocabulary which bridges erotic and politicised discourse, thus breaking down any easy distinctions between them. Officially sanctioned stories of female virginity, chastity and moral probity are countered by poetry which refuses to accept or uphold the politicised narratives which legitimate and support specific cultural and political regimes. In Ovid's elegy, the placing of a Venus figure in this openly sexual poem problematises Augustan mythology which strives to harness and curtail Venus, to re-appropriate the qualities associated with her, and to re-write her story. By recalling and presenting us with the 'other' Venus, Ovid's text places itself in dialogue with the politicised monuments of Augustan Rome, and participates in a discourse where the political and the erotic become intertwined. The 'anti-Petrarchan' nature of Donne's and Nashe's texts perform a similar cultural work in undercutting, and exposing, the Petrarchan appropriations of the Elizabethan court, built around the uneasy concurrence of female virginity and potentially emasculating female monarchical authority. Notably, these poems are acutely dependent on phallic models of power, and representations of penetration, or the failure to penetrate, are used to confirm or destabilise conventional hierarchies of gender, status and authority. Fantasies of sex and power are enacted on, with and through both male and female bodies but not in a straightforward way. They do not make an uncomplicated textual exchange where the poetics of love are merely a coded way of talking about politics.¹⁵⁶

The dialogue between these texts is a complex one. Donne and Nashe in their receptions of *Amores* 1.5 and 3.7 show themselves to be astute, sensitive and creative readers of Ovid, and demonstrate the ability to re-make his texts to have specific resonance in 1590s England. Importantly, their Ovid is not merely a

¹⁵⁶ e.g. Marotti (1982), Norbrook (1984), Stallybrass & Jones (1984).

poet of frivolous, erotic verse but also a politicised poet in the broadest sense, one who provides a model for constructing and articulating transactions with imperial or political power through images of sex and desire. The language of sex as power is already present in the Augustan appropriation of Venus, and the Elizabethan requisition of Petrarchan dynamics, and so these texts site themselves within, as well as against, these pre-existing discourses, contesting their authority from the inside.

The playful and pointed Ovidian wit seems to have been particularly attractive to communities of readers and writers associated with the universities and Inns of Court, and his transgressive response to Augustan ideology perhaps finds a natural home amongst the young, well-educated, worldly, cynical and sceptical communities to which Donne (at this stage of his life) and Nashe belong. It should be remembered that reading potentially subversive texts could be as transgressive an act as writing them - as the Bishops' Ban of 1599 recognises.

The 'backwards-reading' which Martindale advocates proves to be a productive approach to unpacking the complex dialogues between these texts. In reality, however, it is difficult to isolate readings in strict chronological fashion, in whichever direction, and we always, to some extent, read poetry against other poems privileging a relational intertextual reading practice over one centred on a temporally based 'influence'. Nevertheless, approaching Ovid through Donne and Nashe can open up even such a familiar text as *Amores* 1.5, re-calibrating the way it can be made to mean, and bringing unexpected readings into focus.

The texts considered in this chapter take images of eroticised female bodies and manipulate them to participate in varying discourses sometimes quite separate from that of female sexuality. The female body itself seems to be a common cultural currency which places it at the disposal of male authors, and the question of who ultimately 'owns' women's bodies remains unresolved. The next chapter pursues this issue and looks at what happens when female authors intervene in elegiac and Petrarchan discourse. The complicated and problematic

relationships between female authorship, women's narrative voices and representations of the eroticised female body will be the subjects of our investigations into the elegiac texts of Sulpicia and the 'Petrarchan' translations of Mary Sidney.

Chapter 4

‘Never were our hearts but one’: female authorship and desire in Sulpicia and Mary Sidney’s *Antonie*

Petrarch’s sonnets are organised around the narrator’s hopeless, unrequited love for the chaste, virtuous Laura. As is well known, she is cold, disdainful, sometimes unkind, and it is her very elusiveness which sustains and perpetuates the Petrarchan narrative, giving it its unfinished, always-still-happening character. The *Triumph of Death*, however, shatters this narrative in a provocative, and hitherto underexplored, fashion, and does so through the ghostly voice of Laura whose shade returns from the dead.¹ Drawing explicitly on the narrative situation of Propertius 4.7 where Cynthia comes back from the underworld, this poem has ‘Petrarch’ asking Laura whether she has ever regretted her refusal of his love. Her response, taken from Mary Sidney’s c.1599 translation, is this:²

Never were
Our hearts but one, nor never two shall be:
Onelie thy flame I tempred with my cheere;
This onelie way could save both thee and me;
[...]

¹ Petrarch’s *Trionfi* were first printed in 1470, and were often appended to the end of the *canzoniere*, situating them as a continuation of the love narrative started in the sonnets; they were well known in England with printed editions traced back to Henry VIII’s court: see Hannay, Kinnamon & Brennan (1998) 257; of the numerous manuscript copies which survive, 79 combine the *Trionfi* with the *canzoniere*; of the 34 printed editions of the *Trionfi* between 1470 and 1500, 25 of them appended the texts to the sonnets: Hannay, Kinnamon & Brennan (1998) 257, Alexander (2006) 100. Both Surrey and Elizabeth I made translations from the *Triumphs*: Hannay, Kinnamon & Brennan (1998) 261.

² All quotations from Mary Sidney’s works are from Hannay, Kinnamon & Brennan (1998). Sidney’s translation exists in only a single copy in the Petyt manuscript in the Inner Temple library bound with a letter dated 1600 from Sir John Harington to Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford; this manuscript also contains Nashe’s *Choice of Valentines* (titled in Petyt *The Choosing of Valentines*). Sidney’s editors speculate that she translated all the *Triumphs* but that only this one survived: Hannay et al. (1998) 264-5. Lamb (1990) 138-40 has Sidney working on the *Triumph* in 1599; Hannay (1990) 107 dates it earlier to c.1590, and before 1593; Clarke (2000) xxvii offers 1599 as an inconclusive date.

A thousand times wrath in my face did flame,
 My heart meane-while with love did inlie burne,
 But never will my reason overcame.

2.88-102

Laura's revelation is that she was never the chill and aloof beloved of the 365 sonnets, and that 'Petrarch's' love has not been unrequited: like the Petrarchan lover himself, her 'heart... with love did inlie burne' (101). This statement couched in Laura's voice annihilates the emotional basis which has sustained the *canzoniere* and collapses the structure upon which Petrarchan erotics have been built. If Laura has always reciprocated 'Petrarch's' love, then this poem does not just challenge and complicate the Petrarchan narrative but destroys it completely. The sonnets turn out to be purposeless, almost comically mistaken, and Laura's revelation throws the Petrarchan mode into an existential crisis. Significantly, this disruption is encoded through a female voice which thus characterises itself as an ideological force for poetic chaos and a form of literary anarchy.³ Might this, then, be a reason why Sidney was drawn to translate this poem, offering, as it does, the opportunity for a female voice to speak out against the genre from within its very heart?⁴

The Petrarchan genre is a capacious and accommodating one that does not irretrievably shut out a female voice, and the evidence comes from Petrarch's own text, where Laura herself subverts the dominant narrative, breaking down the hierarchies of lover and beloved, male and female, subject and object. While Laura speaks and declares her love, separating herself from her previous representations through the view of 'Petrarch', she also blends her characterisation back into his. The reason for her silence, she explains, was always the support of his own troubled virtue: 'onlie thy flame I tempred with

³ For an alternative, political reading of Sidney's *Triumph*, see Clarke (1997).

⁴ See also Duncan-Jones (1999) on Bess Carey's c.1594 translations of two of Petrarch's *canzoniere*: these might have been used by Carey to promote her marriage to William Herbert, Mary Sidney's son. Carey's appropriation might work in a different way to Sidney's but is another example of the way in which the genre might accommodate female desire, this time of a social nature.

my cheere; | this onelie way could save both thee and me' (2.90-91). The moral high ground remains with Laura who 'never will my reason overcame' (2.102) even when she turns from beloved into lover.

It remains, of course, disturbing that Laura is only allowed to speak and articulate her love when she is dead: she never quite relinquishes the chaste and now almost angelic nature with which the earlier texts had imbued her. Nevertheless, this poem is an important example of the way in which the female voice, even when ventriloquised in male-authored Petrarchan texts, may be manipulated to open up the dominant narrative and contest it from within. It may be precisely this space within the genre to which Mary Sidney's translation chooses to draw attention,

Chapters 1 and 2 have already demonstrated that ventriloquised speech attached to female characters can be used by male authors to weave alternative voices into their texts, rendering them complex and multivocal.⁵ This chapter concentrates on the ideological space mapped out by these frequently disruptive voices and considers how these prior male appropriations of the female voice in elegy and Petrarchan poetry might serve to invite, even provoke, the intervention of female authors - in this case Sulpicia and Mary Sidney. What happens when these fictional voices are inhabited not by male authors but by female writers, and how do they enable women to insert themselves into literary genres whose categories and concerns have been described as overwhelmingly gendered masculine?⁶ By creating disruptive female voices within their own texts, this chapter investigates how male authors prime elegy and its Renaissance cognate of Petrarchan poetry as a mode of writing accessible to

⁵ e.g. *Cat.* 70, 72; the Fourth, Eighth and Eleventh songs in the *Astrophil and Stella*; Petrarch's *canzoniere* 250; *Prop.* 1.3.35-46; *Am.* 3.7.77-80. Propertius' fourth book and Ovid's *Heroides* shift these ventriloquised female voices from the margins of the text to its centre: on 'transvestite ventriloquism', texts in which male authors speak through female voices and personae, see Harvey (1992) 1; on elegy's attention to gender and masculine adoptions of feminine subject positions, Wyke (1994); on 'heard' versus 'unheard' female voices in Catullus, Hallett (2002a); on women's words in elegy more generally, James (2010); on the *Heroides*, Verducci (1985), Desmond (1993), Rosati (1996), Gordon (1997), Lindheim (2003), Spentzou (2003), Fulkerson (2005); on Renaissance 'female persona poems', Coren (2001).

⁶ On elegy as 'very emphatically male', e.g. Fitzgerald (2013) 42, on Petrarchism as 'so obviously a predominantly male discourse', Waller (1993) 153.

female authorship, actively, if unintentionally, enabling women writers to insert themselves into these poetic genres without irretrievably distorting or destroying the contours and conventions which serve to characterise the forms.⁷

Recognising that instances of female speech may already be manipulated to provide an alternative and, frequently, transgressive voice within male-authored erotic texts, this chapter investigates how this opening is productively exploited by the authentic female voices of Sulpicia and Mary Sidney who thus collude with the pre-existing conventions even while they disrupt them. Genre, however unstable, certainly plays a role in shaping the production of gender in elegiac and Petrarchan texts - but where does the agency lie when a woman chooses to write in one of these modes? To what extent can she negotiate a gender position that is contained within the poetic practices already laid down by previous male poets and yet, somehow, not be constrained, or have her voice muted, by those same conventions?

The main concerns of this chapter are thus not so much Mary Sidney's imitation and direct reception of Sulpicia, but the way in which both women actively engage with, and exploit, elegy's already existing space for notions of female desire and authorship. Cynthia's re-writing of the Propertian master-narrative in 4.7, the disorderly voices of Laura and Stella who refuse to remain as silent, worshipped women and assert themselves as lovers in their own right, the voice of Francis in Nashe's poem who contests the dominant cultural narratives of patriarchy and masculine sexual hegemony, all offer transgressive precedents which permit authentic female voices access to this mode of poetics, even if always in a problematic fashion.

Section 4.1 offers readings of Sulpicia's elegies, transmitted in the corpus of Tibullus, and is especially concerned with the way in which she draws attention to her disruptive presence as a female lover within the elegiac world.⁸

⁷ On female authored Petrarchan poetry, Travitsky (1989), Jones (1990), Lamb (1990), Dubrow (1995), Greer (1995), Heale (1995), Burke (2000), Clarke (2000) & (2001), Moore (2000), Dunnigan (2002), Smith (2005).

⁸ The assumptions underpinning this chapter are that Sulpicia is a female poet writing elegy sometime in the decade between 20-10 BCE: Lowe (1988) summarises the case for the historical

Always knowing and acutely self-conscious, Sulpicia's texts exploit and re-shape the gender models upon which elegy is constructed. The next section, 4.2, examines the transmission of Sulpicia into the Renaissance and considers how she was read and received in the sixteenth century with special emphasis on the phenomenon of female poetic desire. Turning to Mary Sidney, section 4.3 focuses on her *Antonie*, a closet drama which she translated from Garnier's French play *Marc Antoine*.⁹ The play is not conventionally labelled 'Petrarchan' in nature but is read here as re-working the gender dynamics of the elegiac and Petrarchan modes, especially in the love dialogue constructed through the voices of Antony and his queen, and the articulation of female desire by Cleopatra.

Sulpicia and Sidney, we will see, re-write some of the fundamental tenets which shape the literary representation of female desire in each of the periods under investigation, though certainly not without some necessarily complex manoeuvring to accommodate the radical re-positioning of their personas and characters. By drawing attention to their participation in contemporary literary modes, both Sulpicia and Sidney make bold and forthright statements about their status as accomplished and authoritative readers, as well as their confidence, even audaciousness, as writers.

The intertextual dialogues being traced in this chapter are multiple: those between Sulpicia's texts and prior elegy; between Sidney, Roman elegy and the Petrarchan mode; and also the perhaps unintentional though, nevertheless, revealing congruencies between these two women poets. Both Sulpicia and Sidney, as we will see, exploit pre-existing literary conventions to find their own

Sulpicia as niece and ward of M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BCE-8 CE, consul with Augustus in 31 BCE) and author of [*Tib.*] 3.13-18; Hinds (1987), Keith (1997) discuss the likely dating of the poems; Holzberg (1999) disagrees arguing that [*Tib.*]1-20 are all written by a single male 'poet of unknown identity... in the persona of Tibullus, in other words as Pseudo-Tibullus' (178); he dates this unknown poet to later than Ovid; Hubbard (2005) agrees with Holzberg that the 'Sulpicia' elegies are written by a man, but argues for Tibullus himself (181-2); in opposition, Flaschenreim (1999), Hemelrijk (1999), Skoie (2002), Wyke (2002), Hallett (2002a, 2002b, 2006, 2009), Milnor (2002), Churchill et al. (2002), Keith (2006), Merriam (2006), Parker (1994, 2006), Percy (2006). On Messalla as poetic patron, see Davies (1973), Parker (1994), Hemelrijk (1999) 151-6, Hallett (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d) on his family relationship to Sulpicia; also the mentions of Messalla in Tibullus' texts e.g. 1.1.53, and Ovid's e.g. *Tr.*4.10.15-30.

⁹ On female authored closet drama, see Straznický (1994, 2004), Raber (2001), Findley (2006), 27 on Sidney's *Antonie*; on English translations of Garnier, Oberth (2013).

way into what have appeared to be overwhelmingly masculinised poetic discourses. Male-authored imitations of Latin elegy continue to encode erotic transgression as a partially feminine quality figured through appropriations of a female voice and thus, this chapter demonstrates, render this mode of poetics open to, even welcoming of, female authorship.

While there has been much interest in female authorship and female ‘Petrarchan’ poetry in the early modern period, scholars have not asked why this specific mode of poetics is so accessible to women. Ann Rosalind Jones briefly recognises Roman love elegy as an ‘amorous discourse’ potentially available to European Renaissance women writers but does not follow up this statement or interrogate why this might be the case.¹⁰ The work here thus builds on the existing literature on female-authored Petrarchan poetry and suggests a reason why this poetic mode might prove so accommodating and productive, albeit in a problematic fashion, to women poets. The classical model of Sulpicia whose own texts stage such a provocative intervention in relation to elegy serves as an example of elegiac reception in its own right, as well as an authoritative paradigm of female erotic authorship.

4.1 *Tandem venit amor*: Sulpicia’s elegies and the lexicon of love

Tandem venit amor, ‘at last love has come’ (3.13.1):¹¹ like her elegiac predecessors, Catullus and Propertius, Sulpicia’s opening poem is self-consciously programmatic, setting out both her narrative fiction - that she is a woman in love for the first time - as well as her literary agenda.¹² Elegy

¹⁰ Jones (1990) 1.

¹¹ Latin quotations from Sulpicia are from Postgate (1924), translations from Postgate, revised by Goold (1988).

¹² Keith (2006) summarises the state of Sulpician scholarship to that date. The attribution of the poems is also still open: the standard position is that [Tib.] 3.13-18 are by Sulpicia, with the preceding poems 3.8-12 (also known as the *amicus Sulpiciae* or the ‘garland of Sulpicia’) having been written by the so-called *amicus* poet: Fredericks (1976), Santirocco (1979), Hinds (1987) see the *amicus* poems as being later than Sulpicia’s and as ‘directly inspired’ by her; Skoie (2002) 13 describes the *amicus* poems as an ‘immediate reception’ of Sulpicia’s texts. Santirocco (1979) 236 reads Sulpicia as writing before Ovid whom, he claims, she ‘anticipates’, Hinds (1987) 37 assumes the *amicus* poet follows Ovid. Parker (1994) 39 argues that 3.9 and 3.11 are also by Sulpicia, and,

predefines the narrator-lover as male and so, from her opening words, Sulpicia's text unsettles the dominant narrative of the enslaved male lover and the *dura*, 'hard, cruel, unfeeling' female beloved. *Tandem*, 'at last, finally' contrasts with the *prima*, 'first' of Propertius' opening line where *Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis*, 'Cynthia first with her eyes ensnared me, poor wretch'.¹³ While 'Propertius' is wrestled down and 'Ovid' ambushed by Cupid, 'Sulpicia', it seems, has been waiting for love.¹⁴ Love, as readers of elegy know, is the initiator and inspiration for the poetic project we are reading, and the two roles of lover and author are inexorably and inextricably linked. 'Sulpicia' has to be in love in order to be an elegist and so already from her opening words we can see that her poetic persona is shaped by the codes, conventions and needs of the genre as established by Catullus and Propertius.¹⁵

Claiming the status, however, of lover and poet is intrinsically problematic when the narrator is female. We have seen already that the social position of the *puella* is ambiguous at best, and associated with adultery and prostitution.¹⁶ By openly declaring her love, however fictional it might be, 'Sulpicia' exposes herself

most recently, Hallett (2002a) 144-5 has proposed that all eleven elegies, 3.8-18, are the work of Sulpicia. Since there is no evidence to support these contentions beyond the texts themselves, the position taken here is that only 3.13-18 are by Sulpicia, and that the *amicus* poems are receptions of Sulpicia which respond to the outspoken nature of her texts and actively strives to re-place her into the more conventional position of the male-authored *puella*. On the Latin programmatic poem, see Batstone (2007) 235. Merriam (1990) re-orders the poems placing 3.13 at the end of the sequence which then becomes 3.18, 3.16, 3.17, 3.14, 3.15, 3.13 thus denying any programmatic role to 3.13. Scholars who read some or all of the *amicus* poems as by Sulpicia also implicitly contest the programmatic nature of 3.13 e.g. Parker (1994), Holzberg (1998), Hallett (2002a, 2002b, 2002d).

¹³ Note, too, the Propertian echo in Petrarch's *canzoniere* 3: 'when I was captured, with my guard astray, / for your bright eyes, my lady, bound me then' (3.3-4).

¹⁴ *Tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus / et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus*, 'it was then that Love made me lower my looks of stubborn pride and trod my head beneath his feet' *Prop.* 1.1.3-4; *par erat inferior versus - risisse Cupido / dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem*, 'the second verse was equal to the first - but Cupid, they say, with a laugh stole away one foot' *Am.* 1.1.3-4.

¹⁵ On the general intertextual relationship of Sulpicia to Catullus see Lowe (1988) 204; on the possible relationship between Sulpicia and the Valerii family see Hallett (2002a, 2002b, 2002c); on Propertius self-consciously drawing attention to the relationship between Catullus' Lesbia and his Cynthia, *Prop.* 2.31,32: *haec eadem ante illam iam impune et Lesbia fecit: / quae sequitur, certest invidiosa minus*, 'Lesbia has already done all this before her with impunity: Lesbia's follower is surely less to blame' (45-46).

¹⁶ Catullus' Lesbia is an adulterous married woman; Propertius' Cynthia, Tibullus' Delia and Nemesis, Ovid's Corinna are associated with Hellenised courtesans: see James (2001, 2003).

deliberately to social and sexual censure, but manipulates the prevailing discourse to liberate and complicate the idea of female sexuality rather than allowing it to be forestalled and contained. The rumour (*fama*) that she had concealed (*texisse*) her love, she says, would be a greater cause of shame (*magis... pudori*) than to have laid it bare (*nudasse*).¹⁷ Especially notable is the diction and choice of vocabulary here: *texisse* and *nudasse* both recall the way in which the eroticised covering and stripping of female bodies is a prime concern of Catullan and Propertian poetics: in 2.15, for example, Propertius writes ‘but if you persist in going to bed clothed, you will, with your gown ripped, experience the violence of my hands’.¹⁸ *Fama* and *pudor*, too, to which we will return shortly, carry a particularly significant weight in other texts from this period, and Roman moral thought more generally.¹⁹

Sulpicia’s verse takes the imagery of physical exposure and translates it into an emotional and literary quality. To conceal or cover her love is to keep silent, to mute her female voice and inhibit her poetic undertaking just as it has begun. Unlike the silenced women of Propertius 2.15 and *Amores*.1.5 whose very wordlessness is critical to the progress of those particular poems, Sulpicia’s texts only exist through her refusal to be voiceless, itself imaged as a physical laying bare of her self. The association between women’s speech and their dress permeates Roman texts and provides one of the common metaphors for the propriety - or its opposite - of female conduct.²⁰ To be decently attired is frequently a synonym for moral integrity, one aspect of which, for women especially, is vocal reticence. In the *Ars Amatoria*, for example, the narrator describes the women who should avoid his disreputable poetry by depicting them in terms of their dress: ‘keep far away, slender fillets, symbols of modesty

¹⁷ *Qualem texisse pudori / quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis*, ‘and the rumour that I have concealed it would shame me more than disclosure’ 3.13.1-2.

¹⁸ *Quod si pertendens animo vestita cubaris / scissa veste meas experire manus*, Prop.2.15.17-18. See also Cat. 64.60-70 for the eroticised description of Ariadne with all her clothes slipped off her body; and Corinna’s unfastened tunic in *Am*.1.5.

¹⁹ See Langlands (2007) on *pudor*, *pudicitia* and Roman sexual morality in general; Hardie (2012b) on *fama*.

²⁰ See e.g. Flaschenreim (1999), Hemelrijk (1999), Langlands (2006).

(*insigne pudoris*), and the long skirt that hides half the feet in its folds'.²¹ While this is comically disingenuous on Ovid's part, it still participates self-consciously in the moralising discourse which Sulpicia's text foregrounds, only to reject, in her opening poem. If to read, and write, erotic texts is to compromise both the dress and moral code that differentiates respectable from other Roman women, then 'Sulpicia' is prepared to accept and embrace the conventions of her poetic predecessors and strip herself, metaphorically but scandalously, bare.

In male-authored elegy it is, of course, the *puella's* body which is revealed, not the narrator-lover's. Sulpicia's opening two lines therefore stress the tension created when a female voice inverts the established narrative hierarchy and appropriates the role of the controlling poet-lover rather than being the constructed object of poetic desire. Propertius' Cynthia in 4.7 has already put pressure on the contours of 'Propertius' story when she contests the narrator's master-narrative, and Sulpicia has the same disorienting effect. Her texts test the limits of elegy, prefiguring Ovid's later experiments in the exile poems, by overturning the gender distribution while still maintaining other recognisable qualities.²² Her adoption, for example, of a cultural position of sexual infamy, reclaimed as one of erotic and poetic renown, mirrors the *nequitia* of 'Catullus' and 'Propertius' as they reconfigure, however temporarily, what it means to be a slave, a soldier, and a Roman man. Sulpicia's defiant sexual stance is thus actually a subservience to the qualities already embedded in this mode of writing by her male predecessors. Even while she disturbs some of the elements that contribute to the establishment of elegy as a genre - the gendering of the poet-lover as male, for example - she equally conforms to others so that it is her female body which is metaphorically put on display within the text, not that of her male beloved. Unable to completely abandon the 'dominant cultural

²¹ *Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris, | quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes, Ars Amatoria* 1.31-2.

²² Holzberg (1999) 176 recognises what he deems Ovidian influences including from the exile poems in 3.13-18 but uses this as an argument to support his theory of a Pseudo-Tibullus writing after Ovid rather than as Sulpicia anticipating Ovid as Santirocco (1979) does.

repertoire', Sulpicia is forced to represent herself as an eroticised, unclothed body if she is to find a place within elegiac discourse at all.²³

Sulpicia, by adopting the posture of lover-narrator embraces the sexual marginalisation and gender dissonance already established by Catullus and Propertius, and blends textual qualities of masculinity and femininity in her self-representation. However, she also prioritises a discourse of clothing, a kind of metaphorical cross-dressing, which, while it exists in Propertius' Vertumnus poem (4.2), is not applied directly to 'Propertius' as lover. Certainly we might read Propertius' Vertumnus as a figure for the poet switching textual gender and personae as he does so frequently in book 4, ventriloquising the voices of Arethusa (4.3), Tarpeia (4.4), Acanthis (4.5), Cynthia (4.7) and Cornelia (4.11). Vertumnus's opening line foregrounds the multiplicity of physical forms which exist within his single body: *qui mirare meas tot in uno corpora formas*, 'you who marvel that my one body has so many shapes' (4.2.1), just as so many ventriloquised female voices spring from the male poet's body. Vertumnus goes on to emphasise the way in which clothing produces gender: *indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella: / meque virum sumpta quis neget esse toga?*, 'clothe me in silks, and I will become a none too prudish girl: and who would deny that, wearing the toga, I am a man?' (4.2.23-24). The specificity of Coan silks seems to be a deliberate recollection of Cynthia's dress in 1.2 and 2.1, thus drawing attention to the constructed nature of Cynthia in particular, and the textual performance of gender more generally. Sulpicia's 3.13 with its images of clothing and unclothing situates itself within this discourse where the fact of being undressed, even figuratively, authenticates her gender. At the same time, the text puts her feminine status in jeopardy by allowing her to take control of the act of dressing and undressing herself, a stark contrast to the Propertian and Ovidian *puella* who so frequently has her clothing removed with various degrees of force and violence.

²³ Dixon (2001) 23.

Sulpicia's 3.16 returns to the volatile relationship between dress and gender and might even be read as a reply to the question posed by Propertius' Vertumnus: 'who would deny that, wearing the toga, I am a man?' (4.2.24). In Sulpicia's poem, she accuses Cerinthus of being unfaithful, following the previous accusations of sexual incontinence against Lesbia and Cynthia. The object of her competitive disdain is a prostitute (*scortum*, 4) significantly wearing a toga (*togae*, 3). This masculine garment was the mark of the street prostitute, possibly identifying her as a 'public' woman as opposed to the dress of the respectable woman.²⁴ Importantly, however, it also destabilises the way Propertius' Vertumnus constructs gender through dress and presents a different answer to his question: Sulpicia does deny that a person wearing a toga is always a man, since it might, as in her text, be a woman. To dress a woman in male attire is, in this case, a cultural code for her social and sexual marginalisation, a way of visibly distinguishing her from the category, however problematic, of 'respectable' women. Within the context of Sulpicia's texts the cross-dressed woman is also a figure for the poet herself as she adopts the literary clothing of the male poet-lover, and builds her poetic reputation on her outspoken declarations of erotic love.²⁵

3.16 has been read as a form of invective, and therefore might be seen as a site of deliberate intertextuality with Catullan abuse poems written about the supposed sexual exploits of Lesbia such as c.11 where she is depicted with three hundred lovers at once, c.37 where she takes her seat at the *salax taberna* and c.58 where she serves men in the alleys and crossroads of Rome.²⁶ But the alignment of 'Sulpicia' with 'Catullus' as the injured party is not completely secure. However much Sulpicia's text persuades us into an empathetic response to the narrator's predicament, her polarisation of her rival as a prostitute,

²⁴ On the toga, Hinds (1987), Sebesta (1994). On Roman prostitutes and Augustan legislation see Gardner (1986), McGinn (1998), Skinner (2005) 206-7.

²⁵ Flaschenreim (1999) 47 also draws attention to the 'cross-dressing' of both the prostitute and Sulpicia.

²⁶ See Santirocco (1979) 233 on 3.16 as invective, though he does not draw any comparisons with Catullus.

ignoble (*ignoto*, 6), public, male-dressed, and excluded from good society, versus her own status as noble (*Servi filia Sulpicia*, 4), secure within the safety and affection of her family and metaphorically dressed as a woman, does not quite stand up to scrutiny.

The direct eroticism of her declarations in 3.13, her overt revealing of her self, the inversion of Roman social and sexual conventions, all blur the lines which supposedly separate 'Sulpicia' from the street girl so that the text interrogates both the elegiac master narrative which primarily seeks to attribute infidelity to the woman, as well as larger cultural categories which seek to essentialise classifications of women. By drawing attention to the similarities between 'Sulpicia' and the prostitute - their male 'clothing', their overt expressions of sexuality, even their sharing of Cerinthus - Sulpicia's texts reveal the problematic position of the female writer who inserts herself into this mode of love poetry. Her self-representation is partially controlled by a previous textual gender ideology which associates a woman with a form of sexual expression which is always slightly out of control, whether she is the Hellenised courtesan of Propertius or Ovid, or the adulterous married woman of Catullus. Sulpicia certainly extends the type, since 'Sulpicia' is a young, unmarried woman, under the guardianship of her male relation, Messalla, but cannot escape the moral hangover from her literary predecessors even when she claims the position of lover rather than beloved.²⁷ Nevertheless, however much Sulpicia's voice might be controlled, conditioned and constrained by the master narrative established by prior male authors, it seems that she still has the power to unsettle elegy.

One of the tropes which Sulpicia exploits to stage her intervention is the association of the *puella* with the reading and, possibly, writing of love poetry. Catullus' pseudonym for his lover, Lesbia, itself raises the idea of female erotic authorship through its allusion to Sappho, although ironically, of course, Catullus' c.51 serves to at least partially silence Sappho as he writes over and reconfigures

²⁷ See 3.14 for Messalla as 'Sulpicia's' guardian and relation.

her words.²⁸ The presence, however, of even this muted female voice inextricably blended with a masculine one, still permits and facilitates the insertion of an authentic female vocal presence attached to a female author.²⁹ Lesbia's voice, too is 'heard' within Catullan texts, though usually indirectly such as in c.70 and c.72. C.35 demonstrates, comically, the connection between writing and love as Caecilius' mistress, *Sapphica puella / musa doctior*, 'maiden more scholarly than the Sapphic muse' (35.16-17) burns for him after reading the draft of his poem.³⁰ C.36 continues the theme as *mea puella* exercises her poetic judgement and confers to the fire (an alternative form of burning) the writings of the *pessimi poetae*, 'worst of poets' (36.6) - though we are not quite sure whether she means Volusius' *cacata charta*, (36.1) or Catullus' own *truces... iambos*, 'fierce iambics' (36.5). Propertius in 2.3 explicitly positions Cynthia as an erotic poet: *et sua cum antiquae committit scripta Corinnae / carminaque Erinnae non putat aequa suis*, 'and when she pits her writings against those of ancient Corinna and deems Erinna's poems no match for her own' (2.3.21-22), although he cunningly withholds his own artistic judgement on her poetic skills; and Cynthia, as we have seen, composes her own epitaph in 4.7. Ovid's *Amores*, too, though possibly written after Sulpicia's poems, gesture towards the female reader in 2.1, and comment wittily on how reading elegy has taught Corinna all the skills of the *puella*: to elude her guardian and slip out of bed at night to meet her lover.³¹

We should be wary, of course, of accepting the references to women reading and writing in these texts as indicative of some kind of historical reality,

²⁸ On Sappho 31 and Catullus 51 see Miller (1983), Greene (1985), Higgins (1996).

²⁹ On female voices in Catullus see Hallett (2002c).

³⁰ *Nam quo tempore legit incohatam / Dindymi dominam, ex eo misellae / ignes interiorem edunt medullam*, 'for since she read the beginning of his 'Lady of Dindymus', ever since then, poor girl, the fires have been wasting her inmost marrow', 35.13-15.

³¹ *Me legat in sponsi facie non frigida virgo, / et rudis ignoto tactus amore puer*, 'for my readers I want the maid not cold at the sight of her promised lover's face and the untaught boy touched by passion till now unknown', *Am.* 2.1.5-6; *Per me decepto didicit custode Corinna / liminis adstricti sollicitare fidem, / delabique toro tunica velata soluta / atque inpercussos nocte movere pedes*, 'through me Corinna has learned to elude her guard and tamper with the faith of the tight-closed door, to slip away from her couch in tunic ungirdled and move in the night with unstumbling foot', *Am.* 3.1.49-52. *Ars Amatoria* 3 is purportedly written to and for the female reader.

but it can be said that in the elegiac world women, at least mistresses and potential mistresses, commonly participate in the production, circulation, and even destruction of the texts which contain them: in 4.7, as we have seen, Cynthia begs 'Propertius' to burn the poems about her, just as Lesbia burns the poems above.³² That 'Sulpicia' should therefore be an acute reader of prior texts, as well as a writer of her own, is not surprising: indeed, in order to secure her reputation as an inhabitant of this fictional world she could be nothing else. The relation, however, between the literary skills and ambitions of the *puella* and the status of actual writing women in Rome is a problematic one which complicates the way Sulpicia negotiates her own writerly presence within her texts.

We know of female writers from classical Rome but, apart from Sulpicia's texts, only fragments of their writings have survived.³³ The moral reputation of women writers is strikingly polarised depending, it seems, on the genre, content and moral purpose of what they wrote.³⁴ The letters of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi (b. 195-190 BCE), were published, according to Cicero, but seem to have been deemed morally unthreatening since they were written to support the masculine virtues and prerogatives of her sons, and encode her own status as wife and mother, the ideal and idealised position for a Roman matron.³⁵ From Plutarch's life of Pompey we know that Pompey's third wife, also Cornelia, 'was well versed in literature', a fairly neutral statement.³⁶ The other two known women writers, however, from the period before Sulpicia, Clodia Metelli and Sempronia, are far more problematic according to the sources and, arguably,

³² Hemelrijk (1999) 47 argues for real women as readers of elegy and 'the importance they [elegists] attached to a female public'; Hackett (2000) discussing early modern romance suggests persuasively that addresses to purported female readers serve to encode qualities of the texts which disingenuously figure themselves as soft, erotic, love-focused, but which actually operate in a homosocial sphere: given the way elegy tends to describe itself in similar terms, this might be a more productive way of understanding the professed female readership.

³³ See Churchill, Brown & Jeffry (2002).

³⁴ On the idea of the educated woman in Rome see Hemelrijk (1999).

³⁵ Cicero, *Brutus* 58.211. On Cornelia's letters see Santirocco (1979) 229; Parker (1994) 52; Hemelrijk (1999) which summarises the debate on the authenticity of the Cornelia fragments; Hallett in Churchill et al. (2002) which publishes the fragments from the manuscripts of Cornelius Nepos (d.24 BCE).

³⁶ From *Pompey* 55, quoted in Hemelrijk (1999) 17.

exhibit pronounced similarities, in their purported behaviour and their writing, to Lesbia, Cynthia and Sulpicia.³⁷

A prime source for Clodia, as we saw in Chapter 1, is Cicero's *Pro Caelio*. The importance of this to Sulpicia comes from Cicero's positioning of Clodia as a *veteris... poetriae*, 'old or experienced... poetess' of *plurimarum fabularum* 'many plays, comedies'. Although Clodia is not represented as writing love poetry, the ideas here of experience, implying illicit sexual as well as literary expertise, and the creation of *fabulae*, 'stories, plays, dramas, fiction' combine to discredit her both as a legal witness and as a respectable woman. Her very fluency is itself articulated as a flagrant repudiation of moral probity and integrity, thus serving to reinstate the association between female silence, both spoken and written, and virtue. Cicero continues to exploit this image of Clodia as poet and positions her as a not very good one despite her experience: *quam est sine argumento, quam nullum invenire exitum potest!*, 'how devoid it is of plot, how utterly it fails to find an ending!' (*Cael.*64). The comment about the ending, despite the genre difference, is especially suggestive in relation to Sulpicia (as well as Catullus and Propertius) since the abrupt discontinuation of her narrative after 3.18 has itself given rise to speculation about the order of the poems, with some scholars, as noted above, arguing for 3.13 with its *tandem venit amor* as following 3.18 since they, like Cicero, desire a more obvious and neat ending.

Sallust's Sempronia, described in his *Catiline*, is another model of the dissipated female writer which seems to inform the creation of the *puella*. Recounting the 'conspiracy' of Catiline which took place in 63 BCE, Sallust's history was written sometime after 53 BCE (possibly at around the same time that Catullus was active) and was put into circulation between about 44-40 BCE.³⁸ There is no evidence for Sempronia other than Sallust which does force

³⁷ Tacitus claims he relied on the published memoirs of another woman writer, the younger Agrippina, but since she would have been writing after Sulpicia, she is not discussed here: see *Ann.* 4.53.3. On Agrippina, Hemelrijk (1999) 186-92.

³⁸ On dating, see Mackay (1962); on Sempronia, Boyd (1987); on Sallust's *Catiline* more generally, Levene (2000).

the question of her historical authenticity, but whether she is a 'true' portrait or an ideologically-driven construct, she provides a useful template against which we can read Sulpicia. Sallust describes Sempronia as follows: 'she was well read in Greek and Latin literature, able to play the lyre and dance more skilfully than a respectable woman need and had many other accomplishments which minister to voluptuousness. But there was nothing she held so cheap as modesty and chastity; you could not easily say whether she was less sparing of her money or of her reputation; her desires were so ardent that she sought men more often than she was sought by them... nevertheless, she was a woman of no mean endowments; she could write verses, tell jokes, and use language which was modest or tender or wanton; in fine, she possessed a high degree of wit and charm'.³⁹

The correlation between artistic skills - reading and writing verse, playing the lyre, dancing - and decadence, sexual impropriety and promiscuity is transparent. As well as the literary skills we have already identified in the *puella*, we should remember that Cynthia, in particular, is shown to be accomplished at playing the lyre (e.g. Propertius 1.3.42, 2.1.9). The sexual forwardness of Sempronia (*libido sic accensa, ut saepius peteret viros quam peterentur*) has a striking echo in Sulpicia's 3.13 where Cerinthus (unnamed) is brought and dropped into the narrator's arms (*sinus*, also 'lap, breast') following her prayers to Venus.⁴⁰ 'Sulpicia' is thus positioned as the sexual initiator and pursuer in the relationship, an overtly aberrant position for an unmarried Roman woman. Sallust's emphasis, too, on linguistic fluency, on Sempronia's accomplished and nuanced use of language, on her wit and her charm (qualities commented on by Scaliger, we will see, when discussing Sulpicia's poems) are all re-used by

³⁹ *Litteris Graecis et Latinis docta, psallere saltare elegantius quam necesse est probae, multa alia, quae instrumenta luxuriae sunt. Sed ei cariora semper omnia quam decus atque pudicitia fuit: pecuniae an famae minus parceret, haud facile discerneres: libido sic accensa, ut saepius peteret viros quam peterentur... verum ingenium eius haud absurdum: posse versus facere, iocum movere, sermone uti vel modesto vel proaci: prorsus multae facetiae multosque lepos inerat, Cat. 25.*

⁴⁰ *Exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis / attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinus*, 'Won over by my Muse's prayers, Cythera's queen has brought and placed him in my arms', 3.13.3-4.

Sulpicia's texts but presented within a very different moral framework. We should also note Sallust's references to *fama* and *pudicitia*, terms important to the containment of women, with which Sulpicia, as we shall see shortly, takes issue.

Sulpicia is probably writing at least 35, possibly more, years after Cicero's speech and Sallust's history but the negative discourse which partially associates female speech and writing with sexual profligacy is still current and actively informs the construction of female gender. By embracing it, Sulpicia confronts this cultural notion and actively re-configures it, so that it is incorporated within her narrative even while the idea of the outspoken woman who refuses to be silenced about her erotic and poetic ambitions is itself placed at the centre of her texts and heroised: 'the rumour that I have concealed it would shame me more than disclosure'. Both Catullus and Propertius also, of course, partially invert conventional social and sexual morality, and disturb cultural constructions of gender, particularly masculinity. Their representations of wayward women in Lesbia and Cynthia are themselves the counterparts of the temporarily effeminised male lovers but the central concern of their poetry is not so much 'female mastery' as the interrogation of ideas of masculinity, subservience, dependency and powerlessness.⁴¹

Sulpicia's texts negotiate an unstable relationship to those of her literary predecessors, as she selectively expands and contracts the elements which they have established. So while she maintains the dynamic of the narrator as lover and poet, she switches the gender from male to female; she retains the moral inversion already established by Catullus and Propertius as they reject the public roles of the Roman man for a life of *otium* but transfers it into a female sphere where to be a 'public' woman is itself a signifier of immorality. She even qualifies the definitions of 'public' women, drawing both contrasts and comparisons between the toga-wearing street prostitute of 3.16 and the female poet-lover. Notably, Sulpicia does not, or cannot, confine herself to the position of either the

⁴¹ Wyke (2002) 41.

male *amator* or the female *puella*. Despite the way previous male-authored texts allow instances of the female voice to emerge, these voices are still always restricted and curtailed by the needs of the male poet. In order to liberate her own voice, Sulpicia is forced to disrupt the limited freedom allowed to Lesbia and Cynthia, or even Clodia Metelli and Sempronia whose own voices we never hear, who never escape the discursive confines of their creators, and invent a novel way of intervening in the discourse that associates female speech and writing with sexual immorality.

Non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis / ne legat id nemo quam meus ante, velim, ‘never would I choose to entrust my messages to tablets under seal, that none might read them before my lover’ (3.13.7-8). Sulpicia’s writing tablets consolidate these issues of gendered authorship, poetic predecessors, intertextuality, female sexuality, immorality and the revelation of the female body, and serve as a fine example of her dense, compressed style of writing that rewards close attention. Poems about writing tablets already exist in the texts of Catullus and Propertius, but are put to work in a different way.⁴² Catullus 42 tells the story of the *moecha turpis*, ‘impudent adultress’ (3), who refuses to return his tablets to the narrator. The text does not tell us how she obtained them in the first place so we might deduce that they were given to her, that she was possibly another lover to whom he had written poems. What is worth noting is the pattern of abuse and its relation to the tablets: while she has them, she is the object of typical, if relatively mild, Catullan sexual invective: *moecha*, ‘adultress, slut’ (3), *turpis*, ‘shameful’ (3), *putida*, ‘foul, offensive’ (11), *lupanar*, ‘brothel’ (13). Realising that she is unmoved, the narrator re-thinks his strategy and plans to simultaneously flatter and shame her into returning the tablets: ‘*pudica et proba, redde codicillos!*’, “‘give back the tablets, chaste and honourable maiden!’” (24). In order to be named *pudica*, ‘chaste, modest, virtuous’ and *proba*, ‘honest’, the woman has to give up the tablets that she has been reading,

⁴² See Roman (2006) on lost tablets in elegy; also *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12 for poems about writing tablets.

thus re-forging the association between reading and immorality when the reader is female.

In contrast, we have c.50 which depicts a day when ‘Catullus’ and Licinius *multum lusimus in meis tabellis*, ‘played many games with my tablets’, passing them back and forth as they exchange poems, and laughter and drink wine.⁴³ In this poem, too, the exchange is eroticised and the recipient of ‘Catullus’ verses depicted in sexualised terms but, far from the denigrating abuse suffered by the woman, the male friend is associated with far more gratifying terms: *lepor*, ‘charm’, *iucundus*, ‘delightful’, *facetiae*, ‘wit’, and the narrator himself cannot wait to speak with him again: *ut tecum loquerer simulque ut essem* (13). The situation, of course, is not the same in the two poems, but the way in which the exchange of tablets is both gendered and sexualised, in negative terms with the woman, positive with the man, provokes a suggestive intertextual response from Sulpicia about the reading of her tablets.

Sulpicia refuses to seal her tablets or restrict their readership; indeed, she is not even concerned that her lover (*meus*) should read them in advance of a more general audience. By publicising both her love and her writing, she flouts the rules of silence which more usually bind women, and foregrounds the extent to which she might be positioning herself as more a poet or public writer than a lover. While both Catullus’ and Propertius’ texts at least partly invoke a sense of the writing of poetry as a private act, to be shared with intimates but which is or, ideally, should be, controlled by the poet himself, Sulpicia’s text sets no limits to the circulation of her tablets, wishing them to be open to everyone. The slippage between physical elegies, either in tablet or book form, and the body of the *puella* is well established, and we have seen in chapter 2 how Propertius, especially, uses Cynthia as the embodiment of his Hellenistic poetics. If the female beloved’s body is, partially, a textual one, then Sulpicia’s tablets can be construed, figuratively, as a representation of her body. Yet again, she places herself in the position of a *puella* despite also being both poet and lover, and the

⁴³ *Scribens versiculos uterque nostrum | ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc | reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum*, c.50.4-6.

sexual discourse which equates erotic poetry with a female body is played out not in the figure of Cerinthus, but in Sulpicia herself. The public/private dichotomy reappears, so that the circulation and interception of Sulpicia's poetry is imaged as a public circulation of her body, prefiguring the prostitute, another public woman, in 3.16.

Replacing Cerinthus' body with her own is especially remarkable given the provenance of his name, which associates him with bees, honey and wax.⁴⁴ The poetic associations of bees and honey, and the idea of the honeyed mouth had been well-established in Greek literature and Hellenistic epigram; Roman writing tablets were covered in wax, confirming the literary connections.⁴⁵ Because of these connotations Cerinthus is little more than a name within Sulpicia's texts as she performs the roles of both male lover and female beloved through the textual depictions of her own body.

This dynamic, so typical of Sulpicia's poetics, responds to Propertius' 2.23(24): *'tu loqueris, cum sis iam noto fabula libro / et tua sit toto Cynthia lecta foro?'*, "'Do you talk thus, now that your famous book has made you a legend, and your Cynthia is read all over the forum?'" (2.23(24).24-25), where the idea of Cynthia being 'read' (*lecta*) in the forum also evokes a sub-text where both the woman and the book are passed around between men.⁴⁶ 'Propertius' continues by foregrounding the *nequitia*, 'vice, debauchery' (29) of his position: *aut pudor ingenuis aut reticendus amor*, 'a gentleman must either not pretend to respectability or else keep quiet about his love life' (27). *Pudor ingenuis*, perhaps more accurately 'shame or modesty of the free-born', is set in opposition to the public articulation of love. But as the poem continues, we realise that the shame is not that of an excessive expression of what should be kept private, or even that of a man conducting a sexual relationship outside of marriage with a woman

⁴⁴ On Cerinthus, Boucher (1976), Roessel (1990).

⁴⁵ Roessel (1990) catalogues the bees/honey topos in Greek literature.

⁴⁶ See also *Amores* 3.12 which blurs the line between female body and text: *quae modo dicta mea est, quam coepi solus amare / cum multis vereor ne sit habenda mihi*, 'she who but now was called my own, whom I began alone to love, must now, I fear, be shared with many' (3.12.5-6).

who might be a courtesan, but stems from the fact that Cynthia is making a fool of him through her infidelity:

*quod si iam facilis spiraret Cynthia nobis,
non ego nequitiae dicerer esse caput,
nec sic per tota, infamis traducerer urbem,
ureret et quamvis, non mihi verba daret*

but if indeed Cynthia were smiling kindly upon me, I should not now be called the prince of debauchery; nor would my name be thus dragged in dishonour throughout Rome, and although she fired me with passion, at least she would not be hoodwinking me.

2.23(24).28-31

The illicit sexual relationship, it seems, can quite acceptably be talked about, it is the public knowledge of where the power of the relationship lies - with Cynthia - which is deemed reprehensible. The concepts of shame, honour and dishonour are here redefined by Propertius, and provide a model for Sulpicia's own negotiations within the moral framework applied to Roman women.

So Sulpicia's unsealed tablets create a site of intertextuality which allows her to prise open the prior texts of Catullus and Propertius and insert a discourse centred not on masculinity - both its loss and its recuperation - but on female desire, both sexual and poetic, and the ethics of femininity in Roman culture. Confronting the notion which equates female speech, and especially writing, with sexual incontinence and immorality, she manoeuvres to both embrace this argument and reject it at the same time. *Sed peccasse iuvat*, 'nay, I love my fault' (9), she asserts, implicitly equating Cerinthus, her love, with the idea of a misdeed and thus upholding the dominant cultural master-narrative which is itself countered in Catullus and Propertius. At the same time, she embraces the very idea of sexual transgression, precisely because it allows her to step beyond the social norms of the well-born young Roman woman. However, she is wary enough to try to delimit the extent of her social and sexual deviation, hence the

prostitute of 3.16 who serves to demarcate the distinction between the two women even while querying that very classification.

‘Sulpicia’s’ syntax reiterates the integrity of her love: *cum digno digna fuisse ferar*, ‘let all hear that we have met, each worthy of the other’ (10).⁴⁷ The centring of *digno digna*, ‘a worthy man, a worthy woman’ foregrounds the kind of reciprocity that ‘Catullus’ fantasises about achieving with Lesbia but which evades him, indeed, has to for the narrative of sexual subjection to continue.⁴⁸ Although ‘Sulpicia’s’ love story is certainly not without its problems, it is striking that her very first poem dismantles the gendered and sexual hierarchy which underpins elegiac erotics and replaces it with a mutuality which is quite distinctive.⁴⁹

The rejection of the idea of a worthless love, which exists in Catullus and Propertius as their narrators expose the moral and sexual failings of Lesbia and Cynthia, again unsettles the typical narrative arc of previous elegiac texts. Significantly, though, the seeds of this reciprocity might already lie dormant. Catullus’ c.70, for example, where we hear Lesbia’s words through the mouth of the narrator, position her as professing her own love for ‘Catullus’: *nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle / quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat*, ‘the woman I love says that there is no-one whom she would rather marry than me, not if Jupiter himself were to woo her’ (70.1-2), and, though ‘Catullus’ goes on to bitterly deny her sincerity, the text still allows an opening for readers to refuse his subjective reading of Lesbia’s words. Similarly, as we have seen in chapter 2, Propertius 4.7 gives Cynthia’s version of their love story, and it serves to challenge much that we have been told by the Propertian narrator. Sulpicia’s texts seize upon these sparse moments of narrative contestation that already exist in her predecessors’ poetry and transform them into the central substance

⁴⁷ Skinner (2005) 225 reads *cum esse*, ‘to be with’ as a sensitive way of saying to make love with, a far more explicit and challenging expression than Goold’s rather anodyne ‘met’.

⁴⁸ e.g. c.72, c.76. On the language of betrayed amicitia, see Dyson (2007).

⁴⁹ Some scholars have perceived this configuration of desire to be distinctively feminine, and have associated it with Sappho: see Greene (1996), also Skinner (2005) 58-61 for a succinct summary of the debate.

of her own work. Her challenge, it appears, is not just to social convention and sexual morality, but also to the literary tradition to which she allies herself.

That the fault which she declares herself to love is as much one of writing as of loving is implicit within the text: *vultus componere fama* / *taedet*, '[I] loathe to wear a mask for rumour' (9-10). This rather abrupt translation does little to unpack the density of expression here: *componere*, given here as 'to wear', also means 'to construct or compose'; *vultus*, means 'face, expression'; and *fama*, certainly might mean 'rumour' but also 'reputation, fame', and is associated with one's public character. *Fama* is also what poets strive for, the lasting reputation that extends beyond their death.⁵⁰ An alternative translation might, then, be 'I'm sick of composing my expression[s] for the sake of my [sexual] reputation', thus acknowledging that poetic *fama*, for Sulpicia, can only be achieved through the sacrifice of her social *fama*. 'Mask' for *vultus* might recall Propertius' Vertumnus and the many shapes or masks which he adopts, and the gap that exists between the historical Catullus, or Propertius or Sulpicia, and the constructed narrators of the same name within their texts. Ironically, Sulpicia's poetic reputation depends precisely on what we might call her sexual reputation, since it is the intricate, delicate evocation of her erotic narrative for which she is valued.

The discourse of *fama* is widespread in Latin literature of this period, but one particularly suggestive example occurs in relation to Dido in the *Aeneid*.⁵¹ We have seen how Propertius and Ovid both embed intertextual responses to Virgil's text in their own poetry, and it is possible to trace the way in which Sulpicia's texts serve to re-write, in miniature, the narrative movement of the Aeneas/Dido love story, giving it a happy end.⁵² The arrival of love, female speech and silence, the politics of reputation and sexual crime: this nexus of

⁵⁰ e.g. *quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris, / ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama, / siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam*, 'wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips, and, if the prophecies of bards have any truth, through all the ages shall I live in fame', *Met.* 15.877-9.

⁵¹ Hardie (2012).

⁵² Keith (1997).

ideas articulated in 3.13 is also put to work, on a larger scale, in *Aeneid* 4.⁵³ It is worth noting that the idea of *fama* is particularly prominent just after the cave episode when Dido consummates her relationship with Aeneas:

*Ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
causa fuit. Neque enim specie famave movetur
nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem;
coniugium vocat; hoc praetexit nomine culpam*

That day was the first day of death, that first the cause of woe. For no more is Dido swayed by fair show or fair fame, no more does she dream of a secret love: she calls it marriage and with that name veils her sin

4.169-172

Sulpicia's text, like Virgil's, locks together the public expression of female desire, the idea of fault or error, and fame or reputation, but where for Dido this conjunction will lead remorselessly towards her suicide, thus serving as a warning story, policing female sexual reputation, Sulpicia re-configures the elements more positively.

It is especially remarkable that Sulpicia is audacious enough here to challenge both the sexual orthodoxy of Roman morality, and also the cultural hegemony of Virgil's epic. Her allusions might be subtle and easily overlooked, but are as significant to the reading of her texts as Virgilian allusions are to Propertius and Ovid. This engagement with the *Aeneid* might be seen as another instance of Sulpicia blending her voice with those of her literary predecessors, adopting qualities of voice or viewpoint which can only be named as 'masculine' or 'feminine' in the most problematic of ways. Far more interesting, perhaps, is what this site of intertextuality might reveal about Sulpicia's reading and her expectations of her readers. 3.13 is particularly self-conscious about its status as a literary artefact, and sensitive to its own reception. Issues of disclosure, the

⁵³ There is extensive critical debate about the exact nature of Dido's crime against *pudor*, defined not necessarily as 'chastity' but more broadly as 'a sense of what is seemly, especially in sexual matters': e.g. Keith (1997) 298, Monti (1981).

unsealed tablets open to a general readership all position this text as one which will be publicly available - a fact confirmed by its inclusion within the Tibullan corpus. Lines 5-6 draw especial attention to its audience: *mea gaudia narret, / dicetur si quis non habuisse sua*, 'let my joys be told by all of whom 'tis said that they have missed their own'. *Quis* is ungendered, so all we know about the purported audience is that they will be of good *fama* since it is said (*dicetur*) that they do not have loves of their own. The sly *dicetur* playfully recalls the gap that might exist between public reputation and private behaviour, evoking the line which is tragically crossed by Dido. Sulpicia has not only read the *Aeneid* herself, but assumes that her readers will have too, and will have the literary expertise and fluency to reconstruct and decipher her own intertextual allusions to that text. Sulpicia boldly inhabits the literary realms of her predecessors and re-shapes their poetic discourse from the inside to suit her own sometimes radical, disruptive poetics.

Sulpicia's texts can thus be seen to exploit the pre-existing female ventriloquism of Catullus and Propertius and expand their use of the female voice to contest the various master-narratives at work within their texts. By contesting the fiction of the *dura puella*, so entrenched, even though contested, in Catullus and Propertius, Sulpicia's texts serve to decentre one of the prime considerations of prior male-authored poetry - that of masculinity under pressure - and re-orient what this mode of poetry might be made to be about. At the same time, while her texts adopt some elements of what we might describe as elegiac femininity, such as the disclosure of her metaphorical body, and the discourse of *pudicitia*, her voice equally assumes the more typical stance of the masculine *amator*, thus blending masculine and feminine in a single utterance. Notably, by performing the roles of both genders, Sulpicia's texts leave almost no room for Cerinthus. He is excluded entirely from the 'masculine' role of abject lover, and is only tentatively associated with the 'female' role of the uncaring beloved, a position which is erased in any case in 3.18. The mutual dependence of these two roles is foregrounded, as is their relative fluidity in gendered terms.

The numerous instances of intertextuality, the concern with writing and reception, the engagement with issues of *fama* all point to an intended audience of sophisticated Roman readers familiar with Virgil as well as Catullus and Propertius. Sulpicia's texts boldly insert themselves into male literary, and public, discourse, an extraordinarily confident position for a female writer to take.

Before turning to Renaissance readings of Sulpicia, it is worth briefly considering the response of the *amicus* poet to Sulpicia's audacious interventions. 3.8, it seems, works very hard to cancel out the transgressions of Sulpicia's own texts, and replace her narrator within the confines of male-authored love poetry. 'Sulpicia', we learn in the opening line, is *culta*, 'dressed', also 'ornamented, groomed, cultivated' for the pleasure of Mars and, we infer, the poet's readers. The itemised description of her beauty which follows reminds us particularly of Propertius' Cynthia and Ovid's Corinna:

*seu solvit crines, fuis decet esse capillis;
seu composit, comptis est veneranda comis.
urit, seu Tyria voluit procedere palla ;
urit, seu nivea candida veste venit,*

Has she loosed her hair? Then flowing locks become her. Has she dressed it? With dressed hair she is divine. She fires the heart if she chooses to appear in gown of Tyrian hue; she fires it if she comes in the sheen of snowy robes

[Tibullus.] 3.8.9-12.

The urge to suppress the contraventions of Sulpicia, and re-contain her within the objectivising discourse which her texts disturb is itself a fine testament to the way in which she upsets and unsettles the established paradigms of her male elegiac predecessors.

4.2 'Erudito poeta': reading Sulpicia in the Renaissance

Sulpicia's elegies were transmitted into the Renaissance in the corpus of Tibullus. Florilegia provide evidence that Tibullus was known throughout late antiquity and the medieval period and, as we have already seen, manuscripts of his elegies were owned by Italian humanists such as Salutati and Petrarch.⁵⁴ The first printed edition of Tibullus, including the Sulpicia elegies, was the Venice 1472 volume which placed her text alongside those of Catullus and Propertius.⁵⁵

The first Tibullan commentary was in 1475 by Cyllenius in Rome: *Albii Tibulli Elegiarum libri IV cum commentario Bernardini Cillenii Veronensis*, and this was frequently reprinted alongside more recent commentaries on Catullus and Propertius.⁵⁶ Cyllenius, perhaps oddly, makes no comment on Sulpicia's gender and in his commentary treats her poems as if there is nothing noteworthy about love elegy being written by a woman.⁵⁷ This makes it impossible to tell whether he is reading Sulpicia as a persona adopted by a male author, possibly Tibullus, perhaps in line with Ovid's *Heroides* voiced through female characters, or as an authentic female author, like Sappho. If the latter, his refusal to comment on her gender can be read in different ways: either he found nothing strange about a young Roman woman writing love elegy, or he was so scandalised or confused by the phenomenon that he refused to confront it and 'normalised' it as unworthy of comment.

Later commentaries followed Cyllenius in avoiding comment on Sulpicia as a female author.⁵⁸ The first to engage with her problematic gender was Joseph Scaliger. In 1577 Scaliger re-organised the Tibullan corpus and created the Appendix Tibulliana, just as he had previously created the Appendix Vergiliana, and wrote a new commentary on Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus: *Castigationes*

⁵⁴ See Introduction; on Tibullus in medieval florilegia, Ullman (1928).

⁵⁵ See Introduction.

⁵⁶ Skoie (2002).

⁵⁷ Skoie (2002) 32.

⁵⁸ See Introduction.

in *Catullum, Tibullum, Propertium*, printed in Paris.⁵⁹ From this commentary it is still not easy to understand precisely what Scaliger thought about the authorship of the Sulpicia elegies. He does not explicitly contest Tibullan authorship but, by placing the poems in an Appendix, something he had previously done with the Virgilian poems of dubious provenance, he is clearly problematising their authorial status. In the commentary itself he writes of Sulpicia as a woman: *fingit alios amatores sibi esset, quibus dolet, quod uni Cerintho addicta sit. Fingit, inquam, ut iam tepentem pueri amorem accendat*, 'she pretends that there are other lovers for her, who suffer because she is devoted to Cerinthus only. She pretends, I say, in order that she may inflame the love of the boy which is now lukewarm'.⁶⁰ *Alios amatores* makes the other lovers masculine, and *addicta* confirms the feminine gender of 'Sulpicia' but we cannot tell with certainty whether Scaliger is reading Sulpicia as author or as male-authored narrative persona, in line with Propertius' Cynthia, or Ovid's heroines.⁶¹

He goes on to comment on how skilfully the *erudito poeta* constructs the verse: *quod sane non potest dici, quam venuste ab erudito poeta commentum sit*, 'it is really difficult to express how charmingly this is devised by the erudite poet'.⁶² *Poeta* is a masculine noun in Latin so we have to wonder whether Scaliger uses it because he believes Sulpicia to be the construct of a male poet, or whether it is in itself a compliment, calling her a poet rather than a poetess. Certainly Scaliger would have been familiar with the noun *poetria*: Ovid's Sappho is made to describe herself as *poetria Sappho*, 'Sappho the poetess' in *Heroides* 15.183; and in the *Pro Caelio*, Cicero describes Clodia as *veteris et plurimarum fabularum poetriae*, 'a poetess of experience who had already composed many comedies' (64). Since both women are depicted in these texts in derogatory,

⁵⁹ Skoie (2002) 65. On the *Appendix Vergiliana* see Introduction, also Burrow (2008), Wallace (2010) 9, 60-61.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Skoie (2002) 90.

⁶¹ Lowe (1988) 194 remarks that 'Scaliger took all eleven elegies [the six Sulpicia poems and the *amicus* texts] for the work of Tibullus, writing at times in the persona of Sulpicia'; Skoie (2002) 97 agrees that Scaliger reads Sulpicia as a fiction of Tibullus - but this fails to make sense of why Scaliger created the Appendix.

⁶² Quoted in Skoie (2002) 90.

even hostile, terms, the use of *poetria* seems to be deliberately belittling, and might be another reason why it is not a term Scaliger might choose to use of Sulpicia. So, like so much about Sulpicia and her work, there is an obliquity surrounding what we can know about Scaliger's own understanding of her gender and authorial status.

The question, then, of whether Sulpicia was recognised and read as a female author in the Renaissance or as a persona adopted and ventriloquised by a male poet, most probably Tibullus, remains a vexed one. Like so many Renaissance heroines, she may well have slipped into the period disguised as a man. It is worth recalling, though, John Skelton's lines in his c.1505 *Phyllyp Sparrow*:

Dame Sulpicia at Rome
Whose name registered was
Forever in tables of bras
Because that she dyd pas
In poesy to endyte
And eloquently to wryte
148-153

As discussed in chapter 1, these lines might refer to Martial's Sulpicia, possibly a fictional character and certainly one whose texts, if they ever existed, have not survived. Given that Sulpicia's elegies were published alongside the text of Catullus with whom Skelton explicitly compares himself (*Brittanum... Catullum*), however, there is no strong reason why these lines should not be referring to Sulpicia the elegist who can, then, be placed amongst English readers at the Henrician court. Skelton's description of her eloquence resonates with Scaliger's later judgement of her as a charming and erudite poet, where the adjective *venuste* is itself a particularly Catullan one. The mention, too, of the 'tables of bras' seem to echo Sulpicia's own unsealed tablets (of wax, of course) which are so central to her opening poem.

So the problem of Renaissance readings and receptions of Sulpicia remains unresolved as far as her authorial gender is concerned. Her texts were, though, certainly read, known and discussed across humanist Europe, and seem to have

been established in England from at least the start of the sixteenth century. In some ways, it is precisely this lack of critical probing into the question of her gender which might be significant. It seems to be evidence of a ready acceptance on the part of Renaissance readers of elegy as a genre which may easily be appropriated by a female voice - be it a fictional or authentic authorial one. Sulpicia's vocal presence is clearly not perceived as being anomalous to elegy, and fits neatly alongside the ventriloquised voices of Lesbia, Cynthia, Petrarch's Laura and, later, Philip Sidney's Stella amongst others. This tolerance for, even approval of, the voicing of female desire within this set of literary conventions thus opens the genre - elegy, the Petrarchan - to women poets. The next section turns to Mary Sidney's appropriation of Petrarchan conventions and analyses how her *Antonie* appropriates and subverts the erotic principles and tropes of the Petrarchan through the voice of Cleopatra.

4.3 'Outrage your face': Petrarchan contestations and the voice of Cleopatra in Mary Sidney's *Antonie*

In 1621, in a vituperative letter written to Mary Wroth concerning her own writing, Sir Edward Denny gives us a contemporary judgment of Wroth's aunt, Mary Sidney:⁶³

[I] pray that you may repent you of so many ill spent yeares of so vaine a booke and that you may redeeme the tym with writing as large a volume of heavenly layes and holy love as you have of lascivious tales and amorous toyes that at the last you may follow the rare, and pious example of your vertuous and learned Aunt, who translated so many godly books and especially the holly psalms of David.⁶⁴

Attacking Wroth for supposedly libelling him and his family in her *Urania*, a long chivalric romance which draws on Philip Sidney's two versions of the *Arcadia*, Denny makes a negative comparison between her and Mary Sidney. Sidney is 'vertuous' and 'learned', a 'rare and pious example', while Wroth is a

⁶³ Mary Wroth was the daughter of Robert Sidney and niece to his siblings Philip and Mary Sidney: on Mary Sidney's biography, Hannay (1990).

⁶⁴ Denny's letter dated February 26th 1621 is reproduced in Roberts (1983).

‘monster’ and a ‘hermaphrodite’.⁶⁵ Strikingly, however, in this sometimes rabid letter, Denny does not castigate Wroth for writing in itself, but for the type of writing she has produced: ‘lascivious tales and amorous toys’. Rather than drawing here on customary anti-female invective (which does appear elsewhere in his poem: ‘leave idle books alone | for wise and worthy women have writte none’), he instead points her towards further writing as a moral corrective. She can ‘redeeme’ herself not through authorial silence but through penning ‘heavenly layes and holy love... godly books’ - that is, by re-writing herself into the image of Mary Sidney.

But are Mary Sidney’s writings quite as innocuous, even exemplary, as Denny asserts? Acknowledged as her brother Philip’s literary executor after his untimely death in 1586 at the age of 32, Sidney published authorised editions of his works including their joint translations of the psalms.⁶⁶ She also wrote secular translations under her own name without recourse to apology, disclaimer or conventional use of a modesty topos.⁶⁷ Her *Antonie*, a translation of Robert Garnier’s 1578 French play, *Marc Antoine*, was composed in 1590, published under her own name in 1592 and reprinted in 1595, predating Shakespeare’s play (written c.1603-7) by over a decade.⁶⁸ Sidney’s prefatory Argument notes its

⁶⁵ For his verse containing the latter two insults, together with Wroth’s bold and defiant reply see Roberts (1983) 32-34.

⁶⁶ On the Sidney psalms, see Trill (1996), Clark (2001); on women’s religious translations, Hannay (1985); on Sidney’s authorised editions of Philip Sidney’s works, Duncan-Jones (1989), Lamb (1990), Hannay et al. (1998); on Mary Sidney’s writing, Salzman (2006), Wynne-Davis (2007); on her life, Hannay (1990); on her role as a literary patron, Brennan (1988), Lamb (1990).

⁶⁷ Lamb (1990) 141, Scott-Baumann (2013).

⁶⁸ On dating Sidney’s *Antonie*, Buxton (1954) 199, Lamb (1990), Hannay et al. (1998). Garnier was a member of the Pléiade, and had a deep knowledge of Greek and Latin literature. He wrote a series of plays based on Plutarch’s Lives: *Porcie* (Portia) 1568, *Cornélie* based on Pompey’s wife Cornelia in 1575, and *Marc Antoine* in 1578. He also wrote versions of Seneca’s Trojan plays: *Hippolyte* (1573), *La Troade* (1578) and *Antigone* (1579): see Witherspoon (1924). Hill & Morrison (1975) note allusions to Catullus, Tibullus and the *Aeneid* in their French edition of *Marc Antoine*. On English translations of Garnier’s plays, Oberth (2013). The story of Antony and Cleopatra has a long literary tradition: after the classical period, Cleopatra appears in Boccaccio’s *De Claris Mulieribus* and Petrarch’s *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*; in the sixteenth century plays such as Cesare de’ Cesari’s *Cleopatra* (1551), Étienne Jodelle’s *Cléopâtre Captive* (c.1552), Celso Pistorelli’s *Marc’Antonio e Cleopatra* (1576), and Giovanbattista Cinthio’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (c.1573) all proved popular: see Bono (1984) 87-118, Hamer (2008) 24-5. Weller & Ferguson (1994) 28-29 suggest Sidney’s *Antonie* as an influence on Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, the first original play in English known to have been written by a

classical source as Plutarch: ‘the history to be read at large in Plutarch in the life of Antonius’.⁶⁹ Although translating an existing text, Sidney clearly chose *Antonie* over Garnier’s other plays, and we have further evidence of her interest in Cleopatra from her sponsorship of Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*, dedicated to Sidney in 1594.⁷⁰ Sidney’s drama has previously been read as an instance of the *ars moriendi*, particularly drawing on her grief for the death of her brother; and as Protestant political commentary focusing on the problem of the succession, and intervening in debates about Elizabethan foreign policy.⁷¹ The reading here is complementary to these and centres on the dialogue of love which is articulated between Antony and Cleopatra. Framing Sidney’s lovers through love elegy, with a special focus on Sulpicia’s negotiations with the genre, serves to bring into focus Sidney’s concerns with female desire and authorship.

Sidney’s *Antonie*, is usually classified as a quasi-Senecan closet drama, written to be read out loud, possibly by a group, rather than to be acted on stage.⁷² Garnier’s alexandrine rhyming couplets are rendered by Sidney in blank verse, primarily iambic pentameter; and the long monologues of the protagonists

woman, published in 1613; Cary was herself part of the Sidney literary ‘circle’ (5), and Sir John Davies, one of Cary’s childhood tutors, in a dedicatory letter to his *The Muses Sacrifice* (1612) jointly addressed Mary Sidney, Cary and Lucy Harrington as a group of women writers and urged them to publish their work (6).

⁶⁹ All quotations from Sidney’s *Antonie* are from Hannay et al. (1998): quotation from Argument, 30-31. Sidney draws on Garnier’s *Argument* but does not merely translate it; she bases her history of Antony on Amyot’s French Plutarch, and North’s translation of Amyot: see Hannay et al. (1998) 147; Duncan-Jones (1991) 77 discusses Philip Sidney offering to pay lavishly for a copy of Amyot’s Plutarch when on his ‘European tour’ in the 1570s.

⁷⁰ Samuel Daniel entered the Pembroke household in 1592, probably as tutor to Mary’s son, William Herbert; his dedication to Sidney of his *Cleopatra* claims that she encouraged him to write it: ‘loe here the labour which she did impose | whose influence did predominate my muse’, and his play picks up almost exactly from where Sidney’s ends: on Daniel, see Rees (1964), his *Cleopatra* in Grosart (1963).

⁷¹ On *ars moriendi*, see Lamb (1990) 24-25, 115-141, Alexander (2006) 100: Lamb uses this trope to link Sidney’s Laura with her Cleopatra, and reads them as akin to Lucrece, Iphigenia, Portia, women who die ‘to prove their sexual purity to a patriarchal culture’ (141); on political commentary, see Clarke (1997), Sanders (1998), Skretkiewicz (1999), Prescott (2008a, 2008b), Kewes (2012). The two readings are not completely separate since Philip Sidney died leading Protestant forces in the Low Countries against Spain: on the Sidneys’ militant Protestantism, see especially Stewart (2000).

⁷² On closet drama, see above; Clarke (1997) 152 on its perceived suitability for women writers: ‘it was free from the taints of display and dissimulation discerned within stage plays, and formally it was close to humanist dialogue’. See also Hillman (2012) on ‘Senecanism’ in Tudor England; and Kragelund (2008) on whether Seneca’s dramas were intended to be staged.

(Antony, Cleopatra, Octavius Caesar) are broken up at the end of each of the five acts by the chorus who take a moralising, somewhat detached view of the conflict. The play is set after Actium and is remarkably lacking in physical action: the main event, Antony's suicide, is described in a messenger speech to Octavius, and the play ends before Cleopatra's own death. Instead, the play functions like a dramatic narrative poem of multiple voices, with elements of the Ciceronian forensic speech, particularly in the first two acts where first Antony, then Cleopatra make their 'case'. What is at stake is not so much political point-scoring following the disaster of Actium, as a debate about sexual constancy.

From Antony's opening speech, his recourse to an elegiac/ Petrarchan narrative and idiom is immediately apparent:

... my Queene her selfe, in whome I liv'd
The Idoll of my harte....
For love of her, in her allurements caught,
Abandon'd life, I honour have despise...
Contemn'd that power that made me so much fear'd,
A slave become unto her feeble face

1.5-16

This abject Antony, caught in the erotic seductiveness of Cleopatra's wiles ('in her allurements caught', 1.11), neglecting his Roman responsibilities ('I honour have despised... of the statelie Rome | despoiled the Empire of her best attire', 1.12-14) and compromising his masculinity ('contemn'd that power that made me so fear'd', 1.15) is certainly recognisable from Plutarch. The lexicon of love which he uses, though, explicitly reflects the Petrarchan and the elegiac, especially in the usage of 'Idoll of my harte', and the imagery of the male lover as slave.⁷³ 'My Queene' might reflect the specifically Elizabethan context of this

⁷³ Renaissance readers would also have been familiar with Antony through Cicero, especially the Second Philippic which sites Antony's compromised masculinity even before his meeting with Cleopatra: *sumpsisti virile, quam statim muliebrem togam reddidisti. Primo volgare scortum; certa flagiti merces nec ea parva; sed cito Curio intervenit qui te a meretricio quaestu abduxit et, tamquam stolam dedisset, in matrimonio stabili et certo conlocavit*, 'you assumed the manly gown, which you soon made a womanly one: at first a public prostitute, with a regular price for your wickedness, and that not a low one. But very soon Curio stepped in, who carried you off

drama, and the separation of love from honour or political authority reminds us of the self-proclaimed *nequitia* of Propertius as well as various sonnets in the *Astrophil and Stella*, such as 30 where Astrophil cannot attend to European politics ‘for still I think of you’ (30.14).

Antony’s surrender to Octavius is figured in sexualised terms making the slippage between political and erotic submission clear:

But these same armes which on my back I weare
Thou should’st have them too, and me unarm’d
Yeelded to Caesar naked of defence

1.24-6

This imagery is continued in that of the triumph, making allusion to Roman spectacle as well as the eroticised appropriation of the triumph in, for example, *Amores* 1.2, and Petrarch’s *Triumph*.⁷⁴ Antony claims that he will never appear in Octavius’ military triumph (‘let Caesar never thinke | triumph of me shall his proud chariot grace’, 1.27-8), since he already has his place in Cleopatra’s ‘triumph of love’:

Thou only Cleopatra triumph hast,
Thou only hast my freedome servile made,
Thou only has me vanquisht...
None els henceforth, but thou my dearest Queene,
Shall glorie in commanding Antonie

1.31-3, 37-8

Antony, who will never submit to Octavius, has already capitulated to Cleopatra, but makes it clear that it is an active erotic surrender, and one with which he is complicit: ‘thou only hast me vanquisht: not by force | (for forste I cannot be)’, 1.33-4.

Sidney’s text blends the ‘historical’ Antony of Plutarch with the Petrarchan lover of so much erotic poetry from this period, not least that of her brothers

from your public trade, and, as if he had bestowed a matron’s robe upon you, settled you in a steady and durable wedlock’ (2.44). Cicero’s rhetoric of clothing used here to bestow and withhold both gender and moral status, is something we have already noted in Sulpicia’s texts.

⁷⁴ See Beard (2007) on the Roman triumph, including its literary incarnations.

Robert and Philip. She subtly re-writes Garnier's original to underscore her interest in the moral significance of her lovers: where Garnier's original gives 'esclave devenu de son visage feint', ('a slave become of her dissembled face', 1.16), Sidney turns 'feint' into 'feeble', lacking moral strength - Antony's prejudiced judgement of Cleopatra at this stage of the drama.⁷⁵ Garnier's 'feint', 'feigned, dissembled, pretended, sham' refers back to his Argument where Cleopatra is negotiating with Octavius, preparing to abandon Antony for her own survival. We should also remember Philip Sidney's slippery usage of 'fain' in *Astrophil and Stella* 1, and Sulpicia's refusal to compose her face for the sake of her reputation (*vultus componere famae | taedet*, [Tib.] 3.13.9-10). Antony's words position Cleopatra as akin to Astrophil, and as opposed to 'Sulpicia', a complicated arrangement which we will unpack further below.

Sidney's translation shifts the emphasis away from Garnier's focus on political betrayal and instead foregrounds the problematic moral status of her protagonists. Antony sees Cleopatra's beauty as the opposite of the neo-Platonic beauty of, for example, Petrarch's Laura or Philip Sidney's Stella, which is the visible emblem of their moral virtue and sexual chastity. By allowing himself to become enslaved to, and by, such a worthless beauty ('that face whose gilefull semblant', 1.111), Antony castigates his own ethical failure ('that face... infect[s] thy tainted hart, 1.111-2). His slippage from the moral masculinity of Roman honour and power is into an effeminised state of subservience ('loe, dishonoured, despised | in wanton love a woman thee misleades', 1.119-20) which is itself morally defective ('scarse maister of thy selfe | late maister of so many nations', 1.129-30).

So, from this first act, a long soliloquy by Antony capped by a chorus, we are introduced to a shadowed version of the Petrarchan dynamic, a partial subversion of the Laura/'Petrarch' or Stella/Astrophil relationship where the female beloved still directs and controls the moral status of the relationship but rather than holding the lover to a virtuous love, she entices him into something

⁷⁵ All quotations from Garnier's *Marc Antoine* are from LeBègue (1974): translations are mine. For this usage of 'feeble' see *OED* 3.

corrupt, debauched and decadent. Sidney's Cleopatra, at this stage of the drama and based only on Antony's narrative, is positioned as akin to Lesbia, Cynthia and Corinna with their slippery morals and uncertain sexual status.

This version of Cleopatra is complicit with her representation in Augustan texts written when the wars between Antony and Augustus were still fresh, and include, importantly, images constructed by Virgil and Propertius which would themselves have helped inform Plutarch's Life. The conflation of Cleopatra with Virgil's Dido - also a female, eastern, queen who tries to divert Aeneas from his imperial Roman mission - is well recognised.⁷⁶ The battle of Actium is depicted on Aeneas' shield in book 8, and Virgil's Cleopatra is given real stature here as the dangerous embodiment of everything non-Roman: *hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis... sequiturque (nefas) Aegyptia coniunx*, 'on the other side comes Antony with barbaric might and motley arms... and there follows him (oh the shame of it!) his Egyptian wife' (8.868-688).

Virgil's Antony is aligned with the barbarous, uncivilised, effeminated east, with *nefas* perhaps needing to be rendered more strongly in this translation as an impious act, so that his 'marriage' with Cleopatra is articulated as something contravening divine law. This is foregrounded in the description of the Egyptian gods, *omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis*, 'monstrous gods of every form and barking Anubis' (8.698) who do battle against Neptune and Venus, pitching the Egyptian pantheon against the Roman.

The *Aeneid*, though, is not itself immune to the allure of erotic love, and while Cleopatra on the shield is a terrifying figure, her alter ego, Dido, is frequently read as one of the most sympathetic characters of the epic, personifying the human cost of masculine imperial values, representing the humanity which Aeneas perhaps loses even as he gains the territory that will

⁷⁶ e.g. Wyke (1992, revised 2002); also Bono (1984) who reads Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* as a 'conscious reversal' of the *Aeneid*. The *Faerie Queene* also sets up a contrast between 'warlike Antony' who did 'neglect | the worlds whole rule for Cleopatras sight' (5.8.2.6-7) and his own hero, 'sterne Artegall' who leaves 'his love, albe her strong request' in pursuit of his 'avowed quest' (5.8.3.1-6): Roche (1978).

become Rome.⁷⁷

Cleopatra is also represented in Propertian texts, while Antony is explicitly conflated with 'Propertius', the narrator and elegiac lover. In 2.16 'Propertius' mourns his own shame (*at pudeat*, 2.16.35, and we should note the connection to the discourse of *pudor* already discussed in relation to Dido and Sulpicia's texts) that despite Cynthia's visible and public sexual betrayal, he is unable to free himself from his excessive love for her. He continues by making a transparent comparison between himself and Antony:

*cerne ducem, modo qui fremitu complevit inani
Actia damnatis aequora militibus:
hunc infamis amor versis dare terga carinis
iussit et extremo quaerere in orbe fugam*

Look at the leader who lately, amid vain alarms, filled Actium's bay
with his doomed soldiers: a base love made him turn his ships in flight
and seek refuge at the ends of the world

2.16.37-40

By comparing himself to Antony, the narrator is elevating the 'heroic' nature of his love, even while condemning it. The notion of *infamis amor*, 'a base love', underpins Sidney's 'a slave become unto her feeble face', and Antony's flight from battle is equated with 'Propertius' turning away from Rome's urban entertainments (*tot iam abiere dies, cum me nec cura theatri / nec tetigit Campi, nec mea musa iuvat*, 4.16.33-34), the elegiac equivalent of warfare, where sensuous pleasure replaces something far more martial. The implication in 2.16 is that Antony's retreat from battle is towards an erotic and decadent refuge in Egypt, both geographically and morally at a distance from Rome. And yet, Propertius tells us, 'Antony' is still also present at the heart of Rome, contesting ideologies of Roman, Augustan manhood from within, through the existence of the elegiac lover. Virgil's Aeneas may have freed himself from Dido's love, but

⁷⁷ See especially Parry (1966); Kallendorf (2007b) argues that 'pessimistic' readings of the *Aeneid* are also present in early modern culture.

'Propertius' revels in his own abasement, countering the dominant, though certainly not the only, reading of the *Aeneid* and taking the part of Antony rather than Augustus.

Propertius 3.11 extends this conflation of 'Propertius' and Cynthia with Antony and Cleopatra.⁷⁸ In a poem which purportedly seeks to absolve the narrator's own compromised masculinity, he compares himself to mythic heroes who were also bound in sexual thrall to a woman: Jason to Medea, Achilles to Penthesilea, Hercules to Omphale, before returning to Antony's union with Cleopatra:

*quid, modo quae nostris opprobria nexerit armis
et, famulos inter femina trita suos?
coniugii obsceni pretium Romana poposcit
moenia et addictos in sua regna patres
[...]
scilicet, incesti meretrix regina Canopi
una Philippei sanguinis usta nota
ausa Iovi nostres latrantem opponere Anubim*

What of her who of late has fastened disgrace upon our arms, and, a woman who fornicated even with her slaves, demanded as the price of her shameful union the walls of Rome and the Senate made over to her dominion?... to be sure the harlot queen of licentious Canopus, the one disgrace branded on Philip's line, dared to pit barking Anubis against our Jupiter

3.11.29-41

Again, the Propertian narrator aligns himself with Antony and articulates his relationship with Cynthia in relation to that of Antony with Cleopatra, so that the Propertian texts celebrate the *infamis amor* of elegy even while acknowledging the shaming abjectness it imposes on Roman masculinity. Cynthia, already portrayed as a Hellenised courtesan, becomes associated with Cleopatra's *meretrix regina* (prostitute queen), both a comment on Cynthia's ambiguous social and sexual status (*meretrix*) and her erotic power over 'Propertius' (*regina*). It is also worth noting the echo in *latrantem... Anubim* (barking Anubis) of Virgil's *latrator Anubis* quoted above.

⁷⁸ See Nethercut (1971) for a detailed political reading of 3.11.

Reading these constructions of Antony and Cleopatra in relation to Mary Sidney's *Antonie* is productive: by engaging with these characters and the literary and ideological values they have been made to represent, Sidney is also, even if indirectly, engaging with Roman love elegy. Her Antony also gestures towards the Aeneas/Dido story, and Virgil's text. In his long opening monologue, Antony recalls his attempt to leave Cleopatra and return to war:

The looks, the grace, the words,
Sweetnes, alurements, amorous delights
Entred againe thy soule, and day and night
In watch, in sleepe, her image follow'd thee:
Not dreaming but of her, repenting still
That thou for warre hadst such a goddess left
1.101-6

Though there are no clear verbal echoes, this recalls the substance of Dido's anguished words to Aeneas in book 4 when she vows to follow him in death as in life, though spoken by the 'Aeneas' figure in Sidney's version:

Sequar atris ignibus absens
Et, cum frigida mors anima seducerit artus
Omnibus umbra locis adero

Though far away, I will chase thee with murky brands and, when chill
death has severed soul and body, everywhere my shade shall haunt thee
4.384-6⁷⁹

Dido's agency and haunting sense of retribution is erased from *Antonie*'s vision and foregrounds the differing perspectives at work here. While Aeneas cannot assuage Dido's grief at being abandoned for war in Italy, Sidney's *Antonie* expresses his repentance and returns to his 'Dido'. As we have seen above, Sulpicia's 3.18 has also been read as a subtle re-writing of the parting of Dido and Aeneas, re-configuring the episode so that 'Sulpicia' takes on the male role and articulates her intention to return to her lover whom she left the night before.

⁷⁹ In act 2, Cleopatra herself echoes Dido's vow when her women try to persuade her to abandon Antony for Egypt's sake: 'dead and alive, Antony, thou shalt see | thy princess follow thee, follow and lament' (2.307-8).

Sidney's text takes an elegiac stance in revisiting and radically revising the *Aeneid* and the central love relationship which it contains: her Antony, too, is, in some measure, a transgressive anti-Aeneas. This allusion to Virgil is confirmed in Antony's last words in his Act 1 speech. He ends with an aphorism on women's changeability: 'but ah! By nature women wav'ring are | each moment changing and rechanging mindes' (1.145-6), which seems to recall Virgil's *varium et mutabile semper | femina*, 'a fickle and changeful thing is woman ever' (*Aen.*4.569-79). The words are spoken by Mercury in a dream to Aeneas and are proved profoundly wrong in relation to Dido - and Sidney's text, too, goes on to challenge Antony's estimation in Act two when Cleopatra takes on a voice of her own.

It is difficult to know with certainty whether Sidney knew Latin: she certainly had excellent French and Italian, and it has been speculated that she also knew Latin and Greek and, maybe, also Hebrew.⁸⁰ In possible support of her having Latin, it is worth noting what may be an echo of Propertius or Virgil, or both. In the second act, Cleopatra laments Antony's 'suspect' (2.433) about her constancy and swears her fidelity by 'barking Anubis, Apis bellowing' (2.422). We have seen that the Propertian and Virgilian texts quoted above both mention Anubis barking (*latrator Anubis, latrantem... Anubim*) and this is one of the instances where Sidney departs from Garnier's French text. Garnier gives 'j'en atteste et le beuglant Apis | et t'en atteste aussi, venerable Anubis', ('I swear by bellowing Apis, and I swear also by you, venerable Anubis', 677-8), making no mention of Anubis barking, the key descriptor in the two Latin texts, which reappears in Sidney's drama.⁸¹ She certainly inserts other subtle allusions which

⁸⁰ Hannay (1990) 27 on Mary Sidney's education, speculates she had Greek and Latin; Knowles (2012) 280 documents Latin sources which inform her work and also suggests she read Hebrew.

⁸¹ Another explanation could be that Sidney adopted 'barking Anubis' from Thomas Phaer's English translation of *Aeneid* 8: 'all monstrous kindred gods, Anubys dog that barking slave' (8.745); in either case, she inserts a description from Aeneas' shield and, possibly, Propertius which is not in Garnier's French original. Thomas Phaer's translation, completed by Thomas Twyne, was the first full translation of the *Aeneid* in English: Phaer published the first seven books in 1558, and completed books 8, 9 and a third of the tenth before he died; Thomas Twyne revised this work and added his own translation of the rest of book 10, as well as books 11-12 and the sequel, 'book 13', written by Maffio Veggio: this English *Aeneid* was published in 1573

are not part of the French text: for example, Antony's 'whome she, false she' (3.29) seems to operate as a metrical and syntactical recall of Philip Sidney's 'that she (dear she)' in *Astrophil and Stella* 1.2.⁸² Garnier simply gives us *qu'elle*, 'whom she', and qualifies 'elle' later in the line with 'l'inhumaine', ('cruel', 892). This reminder of Philip Sidney's *Stella* works to undermine Antony's assertion of Cleopatra's unloving deception since *Stella*, as we know, might have appeared cold and unmoved on the surface but actually hides her love for *Astrophil* for the protection of his own virtue.⁸³ Garnier later utilises Catullan allusions to the kiss poems, cc.5 and 7: 'de mille baisers, et mille et mille encore', ('of a thousand kisses, and a thousand, and a thousand more', 1996). Sidney expands this motif in Cleopatra's last speech: 'a thousand sobbes' (5.185), 'with thousand plaints' (5.186), 'a thousand kisses, thousand thousand more' (5.205). Certainly Sidney's allusions are not conclusive evidence, but they do draw attention to the possibility that she had knowledge of Latin and elegy in the original, perhaps via her brothers.⁸⁴

As the accumulated evidence indicates, Mary Sidney's *Antonie* may be read as an important, though overlooked, reception of Roman elegy and, in some ways, is closer to its 'source' than Petrarch's moralised, neo-Platonic poetry. This affinity is made especially clear in the Argument that prefaces the drama: Antony is 'entertained... with all the exquisite delightes and sumptuous pleasures, which a great Prince and voluptuous lover could to the uttermost desire' (9-10). His adoption of elegiac values is made overt in the language used, and through his rejection of Octavia 'his vertuous wife... by whom nevertheless he had excellent

and was the only complete translation of the poem in English until the seventeenth-century. Prior to Phaer, Surrey had translated books 2 and 4 (1557), and there was a later translation by Richard Stanyhurst of books 1-4 (1584); Gavin Douglas had translated the complete *Aeneid* in 1513, published 1533, but it was in Scots dialect. Phaer's translation is available in Lally (1987): the quotation above is from this edition. On Latin editions of Virgil in sixteenth-century England, see Wallace (2011) 58; on English translations, Lally (1987) xii, Wilson-Okamura (2010) 20-30, 239; extracts of the Surrey, Douglas and Stanyhurst translations are available in Gransden (1996).

⁸² See Wills (1996) 337 on parenthesis as the basis for recognising an allusion.

⁸³ See e.g. *Astrophil and Stella* 69, the Eighth Song, the Eleventh Song.

⁸⁴ The Catullus kiss poems have an extensive 'afterlife' of their own in the Renaissance via both neo-Latin poets such as Johannes Secundus, as well as English writers like Ben Jonson. Philip Sidney's cycle of 'kiss' poems in his *Astrophil and Stella* draw on this tradition.

children' (12-13). The latter may be usefully compared to Propertius' first poem where his defeat by Cynthia and Cupid leads him, also, to reject respectable girls for the disreputable pleasures of the elegiac *puella*: *donec me docuit castas odisse puellas / improbus, et nullo vivere consilio*, 'until the villain [Cupid] taught me to shun decent girls and to lead the life of a ne'er-do-well' (1.1.5-6). As in Sulpicia's texts, the sexual status of the competing women is made prominent as Antony rejects virtue for something far more sexually enticing. The 'sumptuous pleasures' of Cleopatra are contrasted with the moral integrity of Octavia who conforms to what a 'proper' wife should be, though Sidney certainly, as we shall soon see, goes on to contest this easy separation of 'good' and 'bad' women. The mention of Antony's children draws attention to his sexual promiscuity ('nevertheless') while it confirms Octavia in her traditional role of Roman matron.

One of the dominant emotions of the elegiac lover is his sexual jealousy and suspicion of his *puella*, and this, too, is drawn into Sidney's Antony: 'Antony finding that al that he trusted to faile him, beginneth to growe jealous and to suspect Cleopatra' (Argument, 21-22). Strikingly, Sidney re-works Garnier at this point, condensing his more detailed description of the battle of Actium, and minimising his political nuances: 'eut quelque imagination sur Cleopatre qu'elle s'entendist avec luy pour le ruiner, et par sa ruine moyenner son accord', ('he had the thought that Cleopatra had reached an understanding with him [Octavian] to ruin him [Antony], and by his ruin to contrive her bargain', Garnier's Argument). By eliding this politicised Cleopatra, manoeuvring for the survival of her reign over Egypt, Sidney focuses more closely on what we might call the erotic Cleopatra, foregrounding Antony's suspicion over her sexual morals, where it is her fidelity and constancy, so important to Catullus' Lesbia and Propertius' Cynthia, which are at stake: 'justly complaine I she disloyall is | nor constant is, even as I constant am', 1.141-2.

So by the end of the first act, we think we recognise the erotic contours of this play: Antony is enthralled by his decadent mistress who is prepared to

abandon him for Octavius in order to promote her own self-interest. We are reminded not just of Lesbia and Cynthia, but also the fickle, changeable women of Wyatt's Petrarchan verse, and the deceptive beloved of Robert Sidney's bitter love poetry. The second act, however, overturns these expectations and achieves this reversal through the voice of Cleopatra. From her first appearance, she challenges Antony's representation of her, just as the female voices of Cynthia and Sulpicia contest the dominant elegiac narrative:

That I have thee betraide, deare Antonie,
My life, my soule, my sunne? I had such thought?
That I have thee betraide my Lord, my King?
That I would breake my vowed faith to thee?
Leave thee? Deceive thee?

2.151-155

Cleopatra's opening speech rejects her previous representations in Antony's narrative as deceiving and untrustworthy, and repositions herself as the faithful and constant lover, making herself the subject of the Petrarchan narrative. Antony is described in typical hyperbole: 'my life, my soule, my sunne', where 'sunne' may deliberately recall, and supersede, Philip Sidney's astronomical imagery of Stella and Astrophil - the star and star lover. Cleopatra's words recuperate Antony's compromised masculinity and political status ('my Lord, my King') even while her assumption of the lover's role reduces him, temporarily, to the beloved object. The complexities of erotic power dynamics are made manifest as both Antony and Cleopatra claim, separately, the position of faithful lovers, and both compete in terms of the sexual abasement required from this literary mode of love. Cleopatra goes on to articulate the kind of reciprocity we have already noted in Sulpicia's texts when she stresses her queenly status, 'my royall heart' (2.163), the counterpart to Antony as 'my King'. The trope of erotic death which is so prominent in Propertius is adopted by Cleopatra, and her wish 'to have one tombe with thee' (2.178), echoes Cynthia's promise (or threat) that her bones will be mixed with 'Propertius' (*mixtis ossibus*

ossa teram, 4.7.94).

It is not unusual for Petrarchan discourse to appear in drama from this period, but Sidney's *Antonie* is notable for the way in which it uses a female voice to confront and challenge, in an extended way, the gendered norms of the form, and expose the ease with which they might be reconfigured.⁸⁵ Sidney does not discard the Petrarchan model but instead, like Sulpicia, exploits the way in which it already contains a space for the female voice, one previously employed by male authors to contest their own stories from within the text, rendering both elegy and Petrarchan discourse explicitly multivalent and multivocal. Cleopatra's voice, while nominally female within the text, at this point is more or less equivalent to Antony's as they both perform the role of the lover let down, they believe, by their beloved, reclaiming their own constancy in the face of the other's perfidy. This is reflected in the correspondence of their diction as they unknowingly echo each other: his 'my Queene', her 'my King'; his 'idoll of my harte', her 'my life... my sunne'. We have seen that Sulpicia's texts could find no significant role for Cerinthus, that the female narrator was forced into performing the roles of both lover and *puella*: in Sidney's drama the two opposing roles of lover and beloved do have a presence but it is a strikingly blended one which is adopted simultaneously by both protagonists, both loved and loving, both masculinised and feminised, extinguishing the hierarchies upon which standard male authored Petrarchan poetry is primarily constructed.

Antony's Act 1 speech presents a complex mix of guilt and responsibility as he manoeuvres to both blame Cleopatra for his state and accept accountability on his own behalf ('For her have I forgone | my country, (1.7-8), 'thou threw'st thy curiace off, and fearfull healme | with coward courage', (1.74-5). Cleopatra in Act 2 does not try to evade her own guilt: when Eras asks, 'are you therefore

⁸⁵ There are numerous instances of Petrarchan language in Shakespeare's plays, for example, which might be exaggerated for comic effect e.g. 'O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! / To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.138-139; 'item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin, and so forth', *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.234-5 as Olivia offers a satirical blazon of her own beauty: quotations from Jowett, Montgomery, Wells & Taylor (2005).

cause of his overthrow?’ (2.211), Cleopatra confesses, ‘I am sole cause: I did it, only I’ (2.212). Her acceptance of blame in the Actium disaster gives her back moral stature in this play, perhaps exceeding that of Antony. As Stella proved to be the moral guardian of Philip Sidney’s sonnet sequence, so Cleopatra takes on that mantle here: ‘if we therein sometimes some faults commit | we may them not to their high majesties | but to our selves impute’ (2.239-41). In acquiring a narrative voice of her own, Cleopatra undermines her representation as the immoral Egyptian queen and adopts a philosophical role.

She also demonstrates her constancy to Antony, and her rejection of political expediency with regard to Octavius. Charmion presses her to abandon Antony to protect herself and Egypt:

Then, madame, helpe your selfe, leave of in time
 Antonies wracke, lest it your wracke procure:
 Retire you from him, save from wrathfull rage
 Of angry Caesar both your realme and you
 2.287-90

Cleopatra, though, remains faithful: ‘sooner shining light | shall leave the day, and darknes leave the night... | then I thee, Antony, leave in deepe distres’ (2.297-302). In speaking her own constancy, Cleopatra draws on Cynthia in 4.7 who had rejected the role of *dura puella* and re-made herself into a female version of the elegiac lover. Like Stella and even Laura in the *Triumph of Death*, Cleopatra’s is a female voice which takes issue with a prior male narrative which has tried to contain her, and liberates herself from it when she is allowed to speak on her own behalf.

Another trope of elegy which Sidney’s Cleopatra re-works to constructive effect is the display of the female body. Roman elegy gives us image after image of violence enacted against the female beloved’s body: in Propertius 4.7, for example, Cynthia’s body is charred from her funeral pyre and her lips withered

from her crossing to the underworld.⁸⁶ The physical spoiling, by death, of her previous beauty becomes almost a twisted emblem of her maligned reputation in Propertius' texts. Her return from the underworld is to write her own epitaph which both re-configures her role in the narrative, from faithless *puella* to constant lover, and restores her beauty: *hic Tiburtina iacet aurea Cynthia terra*, 'here in Tibur's soil lies golden Cynthia' (4.7.85). Sulpicia's texts, too, make use of this discourse centred on the female body: they write out the sadism so often inscribed on the bodies of elegiac women, but are still forced to put 'Sulpicia's' body into public, sexualised circulation for the pleasure of her readers. Sidney's text makes a striking intervention as her Cleopatra, notorious (in literary texts, at least) for her beauty, makes moves to destroy the very beauty which so often defines her.

Already in her Argument, Sidney plays down the focus on Cleopatra as a superb object to be looked at: Garnier's 'M. Antoine, ayant traversé és provinces d'Asie, fut tellement espris de la singulière beauté de Cleopatre Roine d'Egypte' is re-worked as 'but coming in his journey into Siria the places renewed in his remembrance the long intermitted love of Cleopatra, Queene of Aegypte' (Argument, 6-8) markedly removing the reference to her 'singular, or notable beauty'. Sidney already seems to be foregrounding a distinctive response to the concept of the Petrarchan blazon, the Renaissance adaptation of the elegiac cataloguing of female beauty such as we see in *Amores* 1.5. The practice of blazoning the beloved is, of course, one way in which she is objectivised, textually dismembered as a collection of exquisite body-parts to be lingered over.⁸⁷ Sidney's refusal of this device, gestured towards in Garnier's Argument, is a first hint that her Cleopatra might not conform to the usual status assigned to women in love narratives, that she might, at least partially, contest her position

⁸⁶ *Lateri vestis adusta fuit, | et solitum digito beryllon adederat ignis, | summaque Lethaeus triverat ora liquor*, 4.7.8-10.

⁸⁷ Vickers (1981).

as the object of male sexual desire.⁸⁸

In Act 2, Cleopatra advances what might be identified as an anti-beauty or anti-blazon discourse when she blames her face for her plight: 'my face too lovely caus'd my wretched case. | My face hath so entrap'd, to cast us down' (2.194-5). This is another subtle re-working of Garnier who makes Cleopatra's beauty the cause of her and Antony's joint troubles ('ma beauté trop aimable est notre adversité', 430), and it is worth noting that Sidney does not use the word 'beauty' here, instead reiterating face twice. This might serve as an allusion to Ovid's Apollo and Daphne episode, which itself acts as a bridge between elegiac and Petrarchan narratives, where Daphne prays to have her beauty destroyed in an attempt to stop her terrifying pursuit and rape by Apollo: *qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram*, 'change and destroy this beauty by which I pleased o'er well' (*Metamorphoses* 1.547). This denunciation of physical beauty on the part of both Daphne and Cleopatra appears to be a muted struggle for agency, a compromised striving to escape the way they are positioned within the texts which contain them, where to be beautiful is conflated with being the victim or object of masculine texts. These acts of female speech seem here to be correlated with the rejection of the practise of the blazon, so that rendering one of the prime signs of elegy and Petrarchism unviable is itself one of the aims of these female voices. Cynthia, too, in contesting the Propertian master-narrative, re-constructs her loveliness on her own terms when she describes herself simply as *aurea*, 'golden'.

Diomedes' speech in Act 2 focuses on the tension which exists in *Antonie* between the rhetoric of blazon and anti-blazon, between Cleopatra as object and as subject, as articulated through male discourse and the way in which she strives to re-make herself through her own speech and actions. He begins by describing the 'Petrarchan' Cleopatra of the past:

⁸⁸ Lamb (1990) 132 also comments on Mary Sidney's suppression of motifs of Cleopatra's exotic beauty and sexuality but seems to go too far in describing the queen as self-effacing, passive and self-negating.

the allablaster covering of her face,
 the corall coullor of hir two lips engraines,
 her beamy eies, two sunnes of this our world
 of hir faire haire the fine and flaming golde
 2.477-480

The formulaic nature of this description of her face with her skin like marble, her coral lips, her eyes like suns, and her hair like gold might be particularly foregrounded by Shakespeare's sonnet 130, which makes satirical play precisely with these absurdly clichéd similes and metaphors.⁸⁹ As Diomedes' speech progresses, however, into Cleopatra's present state, the blazon is turned into an anti-blazon:

Careles of all, hir haire disordred hangs:
 Hir charming eies whence murthring looks did flie,
 Now rivers grown, whose wellspring anguish is,
 Do trickling wash the marble of her face
 2.493-6

This anti-blazon disrupts the Petrarchan mode but is still in and of it, as it utilises the same terms of reference (her hair, her eyes, her 'marble' face) even as it warps them, manipulating them into a distorted image that upsets the picture of the sensuous, wanton Cleopatra. It is Cleopatra herself who actively destroys her previously fetishised beauty, and she focuses not just on her face but also on her body, particularly her breast. Diomedes continues, 'hir faire discovered brest with sobbing swolne | self cruell she still martireth with blowes' (2.497-8).

On one level, this recalls scenes of female mourning from other classical texts, but it also serves as Sidney's engagement with scenes of eroticised violence practised against the beautiful female body.⁹⁰ Here it is not a violent lover who rips off the woman's clothes as we have seen in Ovid's and Propertius'

⁸⁹ Burrow (2002) 105 dates sonnet 130 to c.1591-95, close to Sidney's translation date of 1590: the poem clearly draws on what were recognised as outworn formulas: 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun, | coral is far more red than her lips' red; | if snow be white, why then her breasts are dun', 130.1-3.

⁹⁰ e.g. *Astrophil and Stella* 82 where Astrophil promises 'I never more will bite' (82.14), and the Second Song which almost descends into rape, 'now will I invade the fort' (15).

texts, but the woman who takes control of her own body and uncovers her breast ('discovered') in a gesture which becomes a grotesque parody of erotic unclothing. Like Sulpicia, Cleopatra puts her own body on display: she literally writes her fidelity to Antony on her breast, and intends that her dead and wounded body will stand as a masochistic monument to her faithful and constant love: 'for certain seale | of her true loialtie my corpse hath left' (2.444-5).

Cleopatra is not alone in her display; in Act 5 she urges her women to injure their own bodies too, in imitation of her, as a tribute to Antony:

martir your breasts with multiplid blowes,
with violent hands teare off your hanging haire,
outrage your face

5.195-7

The emphasis on the women's breasts is another instance of Sidney inserting her own ideas into the text. Garnier uses 'stomach' instead of breast: 'plombes vostre estomach de coups multipliez', ('pound your stomach with multiple blows', 1986). Sidney's change gives her words an erotic charge missing from Garnier, so that even at the point at which she allows Cleopatra to tentatively escape the Petrarchan confines attached to her beauty, she constrains and delimits her, so that Cleopatra's anguish is eroticised and displays the very body she has tried to destroy. Indeed, the wounding or martyring becomes itself fetishised as the visible symbol of Cleopatra's unsatisfied, and now unsatisfiable, desire for the dead Antony.

Metaphors of 'love's wound' are ubiquitous, of course, in the love poetry under consideration here: the narrator in *Amores* 1.2, for example, foresees himself as *modo vulnus habebo*, 'with wound all freshly dealt'; and *Astrophil and Stella* is replete with images of Astrophil being pierced by Cupid's arrows.⁹¹ But while male lovers might be figuratively injured by love, their texts do not linger

⁹¹ e.g. 'I have my death wound' from 'that murth'ring boy', 20.1-2.

over images of their hurt, even mutilated, bodies as is the case with Cleopatra.⁹² In the absence of a male body to blazon - and Antony's death is reported in a messenger's speech which only details how 'he his bodie piers'd', 4.264 - Sidney's *Antonie* seem to have no recourse but to display a female body, just as Sulpicia puts her own textual body into public circulation. Cleopatra's disturbing violence against her breast replays, but also deepens and makes physical, the mostly psychological masochism of the male Petrarchan lover.⁹³

The female voice certainly may find a space in which to speak but it is confined to certain modes of articulation. It might even tentatively be identified as a female voice precisely because it is forced to exhibit the body from which it comes. The female lover (Cynthia, 'Sulpicia', Cleopatra) may invert the tradition which primarily encodes the poet/lover as male but she cannot completely escape prior conventions. She colludes with them in blazoning her own body, even when it takes the form of a masochistic anti-blazon (Cleopatra), or an embracing of transgressive morality ('Sulpicia'). The form that this display takes is governed by the prior representation of women already produced by related male-authored texts: Sulpicia's texts put her body into an overtly sexualised form of public circulation, replicating the dubious social and moral status of Lesbia, Cynthia and Corinna. Cleopatra is perhaps the more ambiguous figure, partly because she has a place in a wider tradition and thus is already imbued with variant readings.⁹⁴ Sidney's drama seems to recuperate her moral status, turning her into a model of the constant lover, but her repudiation of her own sexualised image as she attempts to 'outrage' her face and body, recalls her erotic and eroticised past.

⁹² In the *Aeneid*, too, the broken bodies of women such as Dido (book 4) and Camilla (book 11) are dwelt on in more detail than is customarily the case with male death: see Keith (2000) especially 101-31, Edwards (2007) 183-7.

⁹³ Although Astrophil's 'beating myself for spite' in the opening sonnet: see especially Bate (2007) on masochism and the abject male.

⁹⁴ Apart from classical sources, Cleopatra appears in various medieval texts as a female exemplar: strikingly, she is both celebrated for her love (e.g. Chaucer, Boccaccio) and condemned as a seductress (e.g. Dante's *Inferno* where she is *Cleopatras lussuriosa*, and condemned to the second circle of Hell amongst the lustful). In the *Faerie Queene*, she is both one of the 'proud women, vaine, forgetfull of their yoke' (1.5.50.2) and also 'high minded Cleopatra' (1.5.50.7) for her honourable death.

Sidney's *Antonie* does not end with Cleopatra's death. Despite the disturbing aesthetic of her self-tortured body, there remains the possibility of reconciliation between her and Antony, even if it is beyond the grave. Cleopatra returns to the imagery of an eroticised death but, in contrast to the macabre nature of Cynthia's promise, Cleopatra's is an image of peace and final repose:⁹⁵

To die with thee, and dieng thee embrace:
 My bodie joynde with thine, my mouth with thine,
 My mouth, whose moisture burning sighs have dried
 To be in one selfe tombe, and one selfe chest,
 And wrapt with thee in one selfe sheete to rest
 5.172-6

So elegy and Petrarchan discourse rather than being irretrievably and monolithically structured by masculine categories and concerns contain fissures which can be prised open to allow the intervention of authentic female voices. The presence of ventriloquised female voices is one of these spaces which invite women writers to participate in, even contest from the inside, the dominant master narratives established by these modes of writing. Importantly, however, while women may certainly contribute to the development of these forms of erotic love poetry, their representations are still, to some extent, governed and conditioned by prior male-authored texts.

This interplay between genre and gender is most strikingly demonstrated in the physical absence of the male beloved in both Sulpicia and Sidney's texts. Even though Antony has a presence within the drama, he and Cleopatra are never seen to meet or speak directly to each other until she addresses his dead body. The textual space is filled instead by a spectacular display of the narrator's own female body, and the very identification of an authentic 'female' voice may itself depend crucially on its relationship to the speaker's body. Ventriloquised voices such as those of Corinna, Cynthia, Laura, Stella are not required to exhibit

⁹⁵ *Nunc te possideant aliae: mox sola tenebo: / mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram*, 'other women may possess you now: soon I alone shall hold you: you will be with me, and my bones shall press yours in close entwining', Propertius 4.7.93-4.

their bodies, mainly because the male narrator can do this for them. Authentic women writers, however, are forced to negotiate a blended position, part 'masculine' and part 'feminine', as ordered by the texts against which they situate their own, where they can successfully adopt the role of the male poet/narrator/lover but only at the cost of being confined to the position of the displayed female body. The dark aesthetic of the tortured or wounded female body as a monument to constancy (Cynthia, Cleopatra) is a particularly fraught example of the negotiations necessary on the side of these female voices as they struggle to accommodate themselves to the pre-existing practices of the genre.

Nevertheless, elegiac and Petrarchan discourse proves itself to be sufficiently elastic to accommodate female authorship. The pre-existing dialogic structure, the presence of alternative and prominent female voices, and transgressive gender negotiations which already inhabit and characterise these modes of writing are the same qualities which render them fluid and permeable enough to be accessible, if always in a problematic way, to women poets.

The texts of Sulpicia and Sidney thus serve as evidence for the way in which female authors are able to re-calibrate elegy and its Renaissance cognate, expand on its existing complexities, and re-write it from within. In engaging directly and indirectly with Roman elegy, both women foreground their status not just as sophisticated authors, but also as experienced and adept readers. They highlight their bold engagement with 'masculine' traditions of writing, and re-fashion them into something more nuanced and, perhaps, more radical. Their receptions are imitations, and yet also expand the concept of what an imitation might be, of how the relationships between 'source' text and reception might be configured. Certainly Sulpicia and Sidney are highly accomplished poets, but their texts are evidence of not just their own skills, but also of the density, richness and latent capacity of erotic elegy to be re-read and re-written in always provocative ways.

Conclusion

*parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.*
Metamorphoses, 15.875-9

Yet shall the better part of me assurèd be to climb
Aloft above the starry sky; and all the world shall never
Be able to quench my name. For look how far so ever
The Roman empire by the right of conquest shall extend
So far shall folk read this work. And time without all end
(If poets as by prophecy about the truth may aim)
My life shall everlastingly be lengthened still by fame.¹

Ovid ends his *Metamorphoses* with a confident assertion, *nomenque erit indelebile nostrum*, ‘my name will be undying’, and also a prophecy - *vivam*, ‘I shall live’. The *Metamorphoses* certainly had (and continues to have) a vital afterlife but, as this project shows, so did the *Amores* and the earlier texts of Catullus, Propertius and Sulpicia on which Ovid’s elegies depend generically. Roman erotic elegy, we have seen, is alive in the love poetry of sixteenth-century England, and its reception and re-writing is complex and subtle. The forms of reception with which we have been concerned here do not always advertise their sources. We have not been dealing with straightforward elegiac translations or overt re-writings such as is the case, for example, with Golding’s *Metamorphoses* (1567). Early modern English poetry uses love elegy in ways which are nuanced, selective and, sometimes, revisionary. It can show us something new about the Latin texts, their latent potential, and the way they anticipate or speak forward to Tudor England. Roman love elegy, as read here, is capacious and fluid enough to lend itself very well to being ‘Englished’.

The receptions of elegy we have traced are rich, diverse and not easily categorised. There is, it seems, no single or unified way of reading, re-writing or

¹ Golding’s 1567 translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

responding to elegy in poetic terms, not surprising, perhaps, given elegy's own internal diversity, its capacity to be 'about' so many things. The English receptions explored here recognise, and take advantage of, the complexity inherent in elegy and so do different things with, and to, it. Notably, the critic Thomas Greene's reception narrative of loss and melancholy has not been borne out by the readings here. What we have traced in its place is an exuberant, un-anxious, creative and immensely productive set of practices that take elegy as their source or origin but re-shape it to articulate the varied preoccupations of the sixteenth-century poetry with which we are concerned.

Ovid travelled successfully through late antiquity and the medieval period to arrive in the sixteenth century with his place in early modern culture assured. Catullus, Propertius and Sulpicia had more effortful journeys but on re-discovery were immediately welcomed. Evidence reviewed in the introduction confirms the interest that was generated by love elegy, and its early adoption by humanists as a classical poetic genre warranting further literary investigation. Elegy found its place, though not unproblematically, on the humanist school curriculum and became a part of European schoolboys' (and, perhaps, some girls') early education. The plots, tropes, imagery and interests of the genre were thus assimilated within the psyche of elite and educated early modern readers.

At the heart of Roman elegy is a concern with erotic love and desire, both as topics in their own right and as a vocabulary which may be used to articulate other matters. The gendered speech acts in Catullus' Lesbia poems are rewritten in the bitter love poetry of Thomas Wyatt. Issues of broken vows and love oaths take on a politicised as well as a gendered resonance, and are put to work to calibrate, authenticate and secure the masculine status of each narrator. In portraying female acts of speaking as deceptive, untrustworthy and corrupt, both sets of texts use a misogynistic discourse of verbal integrity to construct what it means to speak like a man in Republican Rome and in Henrician England.

Wyatt's receptions and imitations of Catullus unsettle some of the tenets of conventional literary history. Wyatt is generally recognised as introducing

Petrarchism to England, but one of the over-riding arguments of this project is that the Petrarchan is itself a broad re-writing of love elegy, and an essential transmitter and mediator of elegiac tropes and concerns into early modern love poetry. To date, analysis of Petrarch's elegiac appropriations has been confined, more or less, to his use of Ovid, but the evidence of his own texts, as we have seen, gestures towards a broader and self-conscious positioning of Petrarch as an inheritor and follower of the Roman elegiac 'tradition'. His place in the *Triumph of Love* alongside Catullus, Ovid, Propertius and Tibullus speaks to the importance of Roman elegy to Petrarch's genesis and development as a poet of love and desire.

The readings offered in the first chapter foreground both Petrarch's neo-Platonic moralisation of the wayward elegiac mistress, and Wyatt's turn back to elegiac erotics centred on a female object of desire whose fascination lies in her duplicity, active sexuality and yet still somehow elusive nature. In Wyatt's love poetry, the chaste and principled Laura is transformed into an English version of wilful, alluring Lesbia, and is seen to be perfectly at home in the court of Henry VIII. Together with the evidence from John Skelton and John Leland, Wyatt's Catullan imitations give Catullus a poetic foothold in England earlier than is traditionally ascribed. The first direct translation of his c.70 may not be until Philip Sidney's *Certain Sonnets* written from the 1570s onwards, but Catullus is being written about and rewritten in English poetry from the late fifteenth century forwards.

Wyatt's poetry is important to the interests of this project for more than one reason: he is read here not just as the poet who introduces the Petrarchan to English love poetry, but also as the first English poet to offer a sustained poetic engagement with the erotic dynamics of Roman elegy. The resultant intertextual struggle amongst the poetic voices of Catullus, Petrarch and Wyatt is especially prominent in Wyatt's 'Whoso List to Hunt' and becomes central to the ways in which the text may be interpreted. *Imitatio* and a recognition of its multiple and, in this case, somewhat contradictory sources is thus shown to have

critical hermeneutic import. The readings offered here serve as instructive examples of the complex and sophisticated ways in which *imitatio* is made to work in the early Tudor period.

If the first chapter concentrates on the likenesses between Catullus' Lesbia and Wyatt's betraying mistresses, and the similarities in the cultural work that they are made to do, then the second chapter foregrounds an ideological shift between the poetic concerns of Propertius and Sidney. The figure of a muse is read here as an intertextual link between Propertius' Cynthia poems and *Astrophil and Stella*, with the muse functioning as a personification of literary practice, a metaphor for the creative process, and a marker of the metapoetic interests of both sets of texts. The muse may be common currency to the poems looked at here, but what is at stake in the poetry of Propertius and Sidney is shown to be quite different, reflecting the varied cultural contexts which serve to shape their verse.

Propertian texts, we saw, use a muse figure to foreground issues of literary orthodoxy, canonicity, poetic authority and questions of Roman literary identity. By reading Cynthia, an occasional muse figure, against the muses of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, we were able to draw out the way all of these Augustan texts re-configure prior Greek representations of poetic inspiration and previous thinking about the nature of poetry itself. The broad literary politics of what it means to be a poet and, specifically, a Roman and Augustan poet is a key issue of Propertius' verse, underlying the erotic dynamics between the narrator and Cynthia.

Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* adopts this Propertian metaliterary discourse and foregrounds it through the incursion of a bluntly transgressive muse in the opening sonnet. Sidney's poetry, though, re-shapes Propertian literary concerns to ask problematic questions about the right use of the human imagination, and to articulate sixteenth-century anxieties about the moral status of poetry itself. While both sets of texts use a muse to self-consciously encode their literary preoccupations, Sidney's response to Propertius' Cynthia is critical and

revisionary, reflecting the changing nature of literary anxieties and concerns in Elizabethan England. Sidney's practice of *imitatio* is transformative, and serves as a constructive example of how Roman elegiac discourse might be used to enable a pressing engagement with early modern concerns. In Sidney's texts, Propertian poetics facilitate a provocative debate about the ethics of English poetry under the cover of a sequence of love sonnets.

Issues of gender and the significance of female voices in this body of poetry have been shown to be as central to the texts of Propertius and Sidney as they were to those of Catullus and Wyatt. The gendering of the muses predetermines, to some extent, the metapoetic role and import of female characters, and the discussion centred on Propertius and Sidney has been especially attentive to the narrative functions of Cynthia and Stella. Both characters move between being the source of poetic inspiration, embodiment of the text, reader and, eventually if temporarily, poet in their own right. Their voices within the texts are used to contest and subvert, as well as collaborate with and support, the master-narratives of the Propertian narrator and Astrophil. This insistence on allowing female voices, even when ventriloquised by male authors, a space within these texts is a significant point of interest in this thesis, and is one which has particular resonance for the readings of Sulpicia and Mary Sidney to which we will shortly return.

Meanwhile, the readings centred on Ovid, Donne and Nashe expanded the focus from gendered voices to eroticised bodies, and explored the dialogue and interactions between four texts which detail sexual encounters with varying degrees of explicitness. Although there is an extensive literature on Renaissance receptions and imitations of Ovid, this project takes a slightly different approach. Moving between Donne, Nashe and Ovid, it uses these texts to consider methodological issues of reading *imitatio* and reception, and combines this with an example of what happens when we read not just forwards (from Ovid to Donne and Nashe) but also backwards (from Donne and Nashe to Ovid).

What we find is that representations of sexual power and impotence are historicised to have cultural and ideological resonances specific to Augustan Rome and Elizabethan England respectively, even when the texts which contain them are self-proclaimed and well-recognised imitations. Especially instructive are the politicised overtones of female sexuality, autonomy and authority in the two 1590s texts when set against the fact of female monarchy, and the concomitant anxieties, both concealed and realised, of masculine sexual failure and impotence. Reading this politicised valence back into *Amores* 1.5 recalibrates what that poem might be about, and offers another way of interpreting its relationship to the officially authorised myth-making and story-telling circulated by, and central to, the Augustan regime.

As was the case with Propertius and Sidney, the dialogues constructed by and between the texts of Ovid, Donne and Nashe are dense and sophisticated. Images of sex and desire are used to articulate transactions with political authority, and representations of phallic penetration implicate conventional hierarchies of gender and status. At the same time, the four poems considered draw attention to their differences as much as to their correspondences, and foreground the distinctive elements of the cultural and political regimes which help to shape them. *Imitatio*, we can say, is shown in this case to be a variable and accommodating practice that enables, articulates and emphasises historically specific difference rather than erasing it.

The final chapter builds on the previous treatments of gendered voices and bodies, and looks at what happens when the author of elegy and elegiac reception is female. Drawing on the discussions in the earlier chapters of the prevalence and function of ventriloquised female speech, this foregrounds how the frequently disruptive voices of Lesbia, Cynthia, Corinna, Laura, Wyatt's women, Stella, and Nashe's Francis, invite and enable Sulpicia and Mary Sidney to intervene in this more usually male-authored body of poetry. Previous scholarship on female Petrarchan poetry has commented on the extent to which Renaissance women appropriated Petrarchism, but has less often questioned

why this might be the case, and how the mechanics of the poetry might aid female authorship. The work here suggests that it is precisely the space created and secured for female voices within both Roman elegy and its Renaissance cognate which enables female authorship.

Elegy and its Renaissance receptions might allow the incursion of Sulpicia and Mary Sidney but, as we have seen, never in an unproblematic fashion. The relationship, especially, between female authorship and a generic expectation that an eroticised female body be displayed is an especially fraught one. Sulpicia is forced to put her own textual body into public circulation via her open tablets, and Sidney's Cleopatra transforms the psychic masochism of the male lover into a self-violation of her face and breast whose mutilation is then blazoned by the text. The negotiations required by women poets to conform to the conventions of the genre are instructive in themselves, and serve to highlight where the boundaries of elegy might lie. Sulpicia, Mary Sidney's Cleopatra, even Nashe's Francis, may certainly press on the contours which define and delimit elegy, but the genre itself also serves to demarcate and circumscribe how far they can be allowed to go. Genre, in this case, is seen to police the articulation and representation of gender.

So the previous five chapters have shown that Roman love elegy has a rich afterlife in sixteenth-century English poetry, and that this has tended to be obscured by an overwhelming focus on Ovid. By concentrating on erotic elegy as a genre, the work here re-claims a place for Catullus, Propertius and Sulpicia alongside Ovid in the Renaissance generally and, more specifically, in the burgeoning literature of Tudor England. The concerns of Roman, particularly Augustan, poetry seem to find a productive home in sixteenth-century England, and play a significant role in shaping English love poetry. At the same time, this project re-calibrates the importance of Petrarch, reading the Petrarchan as itself a reception, imitation and re-writing of love elegy. English poets thus engaged

with elegy both directly as well as through the mediations of Petrarch, adding to the complexities of elegy's 'Englishing'.

The scope of this thesis has only allowed space to trace English receptions of elegy at key points and with a few writers and texts of the sixteenth century, and there is certainly more to be done in terms of elegy's presence in Tudor England, as well as with love elegy in Italy and France, possibly Spain too. While there is some ongoing analysis of the role of Ovid in Restoration literature, there does not appear to be any work underway on Catullus or the other elegists in the seventeenth century or, moving backwards, in the fifteenth century after they were re-discovered.²

As well as extending the scope of this project chronologically and geographically, thinking about how reception, *imitatio*, and intertextuality work in early modern poetics, and refining the relationships between these terms could be finessed. While classicists have been active in theorising the field of classical reception, more interdisciplinary dialogue with early modernists would be productive. The readings here have tried to be alert to the scholarship in both disciplines, but there is still much to be learnt about how to account for the relationships between texts which are mediated via other poets and intervening discourses such as is the case here with the Petrarchan. Methodologies and a critical vocabulary for managing the non-linear complexities of receptions and literary 'traditions' still need to be honed.

One of the unforeseen findings of this project has been the role and importance of female voices within elegy itself and its receptions. In 1990, Ann Rosalind Jones briefly recognised Roman elegy as an 'amorous discourse' potentially available to Renaissance women writers but did not probe deeper into why this might be the case.³ The research here thus prompts further questions on this topic: what is the relationship between early modern women love poets, Petrarchism, and Roman erotic elegy? Are female poets reading elegy

² On Ovid in the Restoration period e.g. Gillespie (1992), Stapleton (2001), Lyne (2002), Wiseman (2008); Gaisser (1993) does a fine job of tracing Catullus in fifteenth-century Italy, but is limited on England and France.

³ Jones (1990) 1.

directly or via its receptions? If directly, then are they reading in Latin or in translation and, if the latter, then whose translations? Sappho, we know, was a well-known figure in the Renaissance of the classical female love poet, but there is certainly more work to be done on Sulpicia. Given prevailing misogynistic discourses associating writing women with a lack of chastity, why are early modern female poets so drawn to this form of erotic discourse, and what does it enable them to do? The relationships between elegy and the love lyrics of Christine de Pisan, Louise Labé, Pernette de Guillet, Marguerite de Navarre, Veronica Franco, Mary Queen of Scots, Isabella Whitney, Aemilia Lanyer, Mary Wroth, Lucy Hutchinson and Aphra Behn could prove instructive both on the topics of early modern women's poetry, and the gendered receptions and afterlife of Roman love elegy.

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